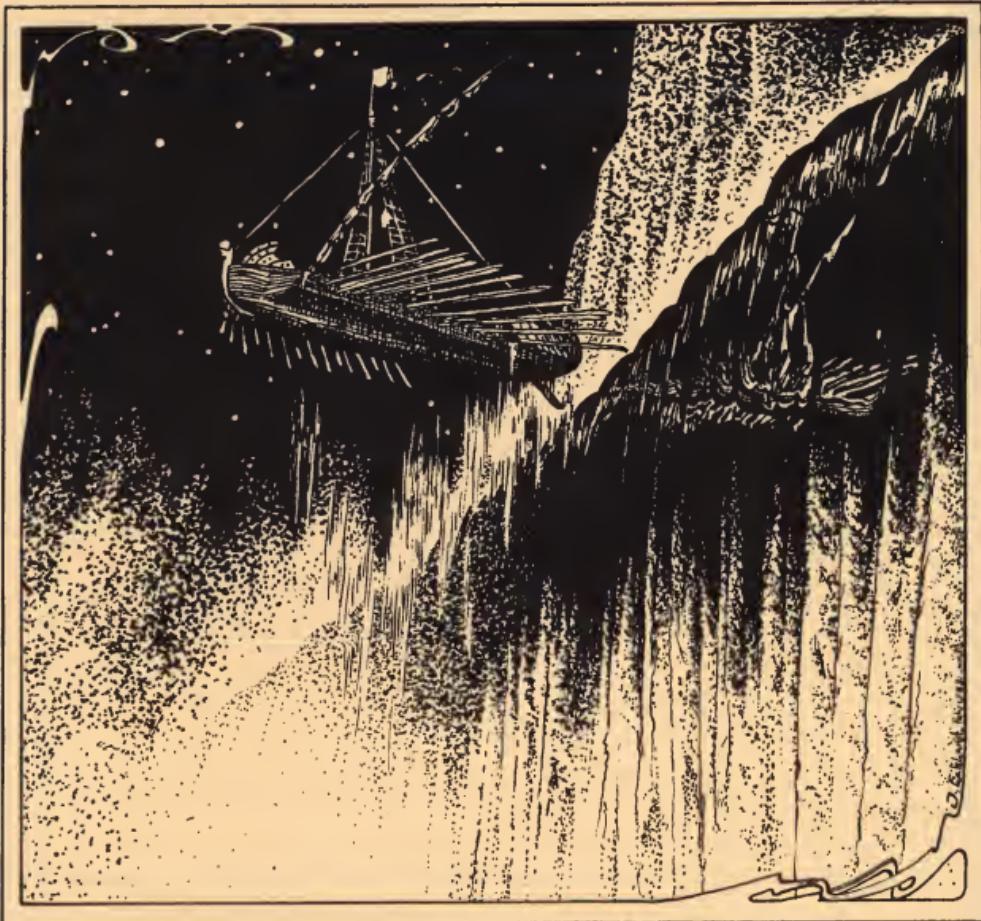


# LOVECRAFT STUDIES 18



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*Lovecraft Studies 18*

Volume 8, Number 1

Spring 1989

Published 1 April 1989

Cover by Jason C. Eckhardt

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*Lovecraft Studies* is published twice a year, in Spring and in Fall. Price per issue is \$4.50 in U. S. funds. Orders should be sent to the publisher, *Necronomicon Press*, 101 Lockwood Street, West Warwick, RI 02893 USA.

Articles and letters should be sent to the editor, S. T. Joshi, c/o Necronomicon Press, and must be accompanied by a self-addressed stamped envelope if return is desired. All reviews are assigned. Literary rights for articles and reviews will reside with *Lovecraft Studies* for one year after publication, at which time they will revert to the respective authors. Payment is in contributor's copies.

## *Lovecraft and James Joyce*

By Norman Gayford

In *Axel's Castle*, Edmund Wilson wrote, in 1931,

It is not usually recognized that writers such as W. B. Yeats, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot, Gertrude Stein, Marcel Proust and Paul Valéry represent the culmination of a self-conscious and very important literary movement; and even when we have become aware that these writers have something in common, that they belong to a common school, we are likely to be rather vague as to what its distinguishing features are.<sup>1</sup>

H. P. Lovecraft recognized the relatedness of those artists and the influence their work would have upon literature. He wrote, in a 1928 letter,

I myself think that the extreme methods of Joyce, Eliot and their congeners (E. E. Cummings, Hart Crane, . . . D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein . . . Marcel Proust, etc. etc.) do indeed transcend the limits of real art; though I believe they are destined to exert a strong influence upon art itself.<sup>2</sup>

Clearly, Lovecraft was an astute observer of literary trends and quite in line with the more recognized critics of his day. Given his opinions regarding Joyce and his belief that the work of the triad, Joyce, Woolf, and Lawrence, was beyond the definitions of traditional art, we might wonder what of value he found in their work, particularly in Joyce's, especially when one considers that he did not digest *Ulysses*. To J. Vernon Shea, he wrote,

I have not read *Ulysses*, because such extracts as I have seen convince me that it would hardly be worth the time & energy. Without doubt it forms an important landmark in the history of prose expression, but so far as I can see it is of theoretical significance rather than actual aesthetic value. It represents the intensive development . . . of a literary principle which will greatly effect future writing, but which defeats its own ends. . . . And yet there is no more powerful or penetrant writer living than Joyce when he is not pursuing his theory to these ultimate extremes. (5 February 1932; SL IV.14-16.)

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1. Edmund Wilson, *Axel's Castle* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1931) 1, 17, in Maria Elisabeth Kronegger, *James Joyce and Associated Image Makers* (New Haven: College & University Press, 1968) 24.
2. H. P. Lovecraft to Zealia Brown Reed (Bishop), 2 October 1928; *Selected Letters*, eds. August Derleth, Donald Wandrei, and James Turner, 5 vols. (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1965-76) II.248-50.

Had Lovecraft completed a reading of *Ulysses*, he would have found traces of Gothic images and motifs in Joyce's work.

Man's fragile position in the vastness of history is examined in *Ulysses*. We know Lovecraft's position on that subject. "Telemachus" is a chapter of *Ulysses* which explores that position in detail. When Buck adores the sea with his "Thalatta! Thalatta! She is our great sweet mother," and when, shortly later, Stephen ruminates on "scadeth, mildest of all deaths known to man. Old Father Ocean," the passages intimate a dissolution within that salty element. Lovecraft sometimes thought of the sea in this way. His work is

suffused by a horror of the sea that is actually a horror of returning to the sea and its liquid mix of alien elements. The sea is dissolution, a return from the many to the one, and while Lovecraft is repelled by such a dissolution, he is also perversely drawn toward it, mostly as a means of escaping the prisonhouse multiplicity of the world.\*

Dissolution can take many forms, some rapid, some excruciatingly slow. Quite near Mulligan's reference to the sea, Stephen reduces the ocean's dissolving power of the ocean to that which ate away his mother: "The ring of bay and skyline held a dull green mass of liquid. A bowl of white china had stood beside her deathbed holding the green sluggish bile which she had torn up from her rotting liver" (5). Juxtaposed, these images draw an analogy between oceanic power and internal disintegration. Lovecraft's work seems a design to fuse "the embodied and the disembodied, horror and terror, inside and outside . . . and so achieve a grand synthesis matching the quest of a symbolist like Mallarmé . . . an absolute and self-destructive symbolism".

Mixing dream and death is a Gothic motif. To Stephen, "in a dream, silently, she [his mother] had come to him, her wasted body within its loose graveclothes giving off an odour of wax and rosewood, her breath beat over him with mute secret words, a faint odour of wetted ashes" (10). This post-death image of love is exactly the strength and attraction D. H. Lawrence found in Poe's work. A beyond-the-grave experience, whether in waking or in dream, is "a lust of love" and "the desire to possess, or be possessed by, the beloved utterly . . . [and] the result is the dissolution of both souls, each losing itself in transgressing its own bounds." Stephen is involved in a dissolution of self through the guilt of his unresolved hate/love of his mother, as we see in his words about "Love among the tombstones" (108), and "in the midst of death we are in life. Both ends meet. Tantalising for the poor dead" (108). Stephen, if not Joyce, equates love and death in the image "underdarkneath the night: mouth south: tomb womb" (138); he vulgarizes in the turn of phrase alluding to Biblical Revelation [a book passages of which Lovecraft paralleled stylistically in *Dream-Quest*, though he implied no sexuality]: "Knocking them all up out of their graves" (105).

"Fishgods" (13) are mentioned by Joyce in *Ulysses*; they also constituted a motif with which Lovecraft played in both "Dagon" and "The Shadow over Innsmouth". Transformation into fishgods is another form of return to oceanic dissolution. The horror of the element as expressed in Joyce's "Fish's face, bloodless and livid" (101), and "God becomes man becomes fish" (50), a reductive image parodying the Christian incarnation, is very much in Lovecraft's ballpark.

From a literary point of view, the vast emptiness was another rich, if frightening, element for literary exploration. Surely, then, he would have found Joyce/Stephen's diction peripherally interesting: "The void awaits surely all them that weave the wind" (21). Had Lovecraft read Joyce's *Pomes Penyeach*, published in 1936, the year before he died, he might have made a small exception to the generally scathing reviews which he had made of modern poetry, especially in the twenties. "Nightpiece" exemplifies the tone of twentieth-century neo-Gothic atmospherics, at least as Lovecraft expressed them.

Gaunt in gloom,  
The pale stars their torches,  
Enshrouded wave.  
Ghostfires from heaven's far verges faint illume,

3. James Joyce, *Ulysses* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961) 5, 50. All subsequent *Ulysses* quotations are taken from this text and all further notes will be followed by page numbers in parentheses.

4. Barton Levi St. Armand, *The Roots of Horror in the Fiction of H. P. Lovecraft* (Elizabethtown: Dragon Press, 1977) 62-63.

5. St. Armand, 42.

6. D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classical American Literature* (1923; rpt. New York: Penguin Books, 1981) 86.

Arches on soaring arches,  
Night's sindark nave.

And long and loud  
To night's nave upsoaring,  
A starknell tolls  
As the bleak incense surges, cloud on cloud,  
Voidward from the adoring  
Waste of souls.'

Doubly powerful, these stanzas image interstellar vastness and express a neo-Gothic apperception in their metaphorical architectonics. Space, the void, is a cathedral which in all its medieval grandeur spawned literary Gothicism in artistic minds long ago. "Like a cathedral, this neo-medieval work contains an infinite quantity of motifs and symbols, all subtly worked," says Thiebaut.<sup>7</sup> Ancient and modern Gothic concerns meet in this single Joyce poem.

Horace Gregory found the poem apocalyptic. "In *Pomes Penyeach*," he wrote, "the images of fear increase. . . . The nightmare of history is re-entered and as it closes the melodic clarity of Joyce's line seems to deceive the ear."<sup>8</sup> Lovecraft, too, found history, or the time-stream, nightmarish. To be overwhelmed by that in which one is immersed is to drown. St. Armand writes, "Lovecraftian horror occurs when one is fully aware of the grip of nightmare and can feel oneself being overtaken by it."<sup>9</sup> We are returned, then, to the image of self dissolving from within a metaphoric ocean.

Not just in "Nightpiece" did Joyce work with a fusion of space and time in their vastness. In *Ulysses* "the arguments between man and world, the spiritual core of all great novels, becomes . . . a great . . . revelation about the inner and outer world, . . . about matter, space, and time".<sup>10</sup> That Lovecraft found something of intellectual, if not literary, value in Joyce's work despite its use of stream-of-consciousness, is not shocking if one accepts St. Armand's assertion that "For Lovecraft, a firm believer in Einstein's Theory of Relativity, microcosm and macrocosm are truly the same."<sup>11</sup>

The climactic scene in the *Dream-Quest* involves Randolph Carter's decision to leap into the deepest abyss in weird or neo-Gothic literature: the cosmos itself. Like Stephen, we can almost "hear the ruin of all space, shattered glass and toppling masonry, and time one livid final flame" (24). Since that *Ulysses* passage itself is an allusion to Blake,<sup>12</sup> we might venture that Joyce, Blake, and Lovecraft shared a dark metaphorical vision of the architecture of space and time. To look at it another way, Will Brangwen's "Gothic form, which always asserted the broken desire of mankind in its pointed arches, escaping the rolling, absolute beauty of the round arch",<sup>13</sup> breaks entirely. The terror of Absolute Beauty, which in one form may be the cyclicity and inescapability of history or time, shatters the cathedral-universe.

The Joycean "soul is the form of forms" (26) because it is the artist's soul, outside of the collapsing and restructuring universe, that re-visions the world. "For through the unknown ultimate cycle had lived a thought and a vision of a dreamer's boyhood, and now there were re-made a waking world and an old cherished city to body and to justify these things," says the *Dream-Quest* narrator.<sup>14</sup> Poe, whose work has some influence on Lovecraft's and Joyce's, suggests, according to Kronegger, "that man becomes God, by affirming the same process of 'creation' and

7. James Joyce, *Collected Poems* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978) 55.

8. Marcel Thiebaut, "Ulysse et James Joyce", *Revue de Paris* 3 (1929) 944-58, in Robert A. Deming, ed., *James Joyce: The Critical Heritage*, 2 vols. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970) 2:478-79.

9. Horace Gregory, "Fifty Lyrics by the Author of *Ulysses*", *New York Herald Tribune Books*, 13 December 1936; in Deming, 2:646-47.

10. St. Armand, 23.

11. Carola Giedion-Welcker, "On *Ulysses* by James Joyce", *Neue Rundschau* 21 (1928) 18-32, in Deming, 2:443.

12. St. Armand, 65.

13. Weldon Thornton, *Allusions in Ulysses: An Annotated List* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1928) 28.

14. D.H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow* (1915; rpt. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1983) 237.

15. H. P. Lovecraft, *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, in *At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels*, eds. August Derleth and S. T. Joshi (Sauk City, WI: Arkham House, 1985) 406.

irradiation, returning into itself, will happen again and again".<sup>16</sup> Joyce's narrator calls this "Reincarnation" in the statement "Some people believe, he said, that we go on living in another body after death, that we lived before. They call it reincarnation. That we all lived before on the earth thousands of years ago or some other planet" (65). Randolph Carter's experiences of plural incarnation on earth and another planet come to mind.

Randolph Carter's quest shares at least one other similarity with Joyce's modern *Odyssey*: both involve, at some stage, experience with "siren charms" (65) and "sirens, enemies of man's reason" (665). Nyarlathotep and Azathoth are Carter's sirens. Sirens are annihilators of rationality. Poe gave them a collective name: the Imp of the Perverse. They are what Joyce is talking about when he writes

There are sins or . . . evil memories which are hidden away by man in the darkest places of the heart but they abide there and wait. . . . Yet a chance word will call them forth suddenly and they will rise up to confront him in the most various circumstances, a vision or a dream. (421)

Maria Elisabeth Kronegger wrote an extensive study of Poe's influence on Joyce. She believed that the Poe revival in England, which took place in Joyce's [and Lovecraft's] time, coupled with the support of Poe's work on the parts of Wilde and Swinburne, who "are frequently quoted throughout Joyce's novels", injected Poe into Joyce's consciousness.<sup>17</sup> "To Poe there was no beauty without strangeness . . . [and] It is significant that Poe's concept of the strange . . . became one of Joyce's leading devices in the use of images," Kronegger wrote.<sup>18</sup> That is certainly clear in *Ulysses*, wherein we find mention of "The witching hour of night" (445), "Lilith, the nighthag" (497), "A skeleton judashand" (510), "Cat of nine lives" (553), "dance of death [recalling Poe's 'Masque of the Red Death']" (579), "corpse-chewer! Raw head and bloodybones!" (581), "Lemur" (580), "his chamber of horrors" (629), "pale vampire" (132), and so on. These are not pleasant or lovely images; they are perverse, grotesque, Gothic-laden and frightening. Joyce's primary aim was not to write a neo-Gothic novel; nonetheless, he found dark beauty—or siren's allure—in these kinds of images. Their presence in his work may have been a small part of the basis underlying Lovecraft's rather grudging acknowledgement of Joyce's work.

Even more Poe-esque, though it goes unmentioned by Kronegger, is the extended focus on coffins and the deteriorating corpse on pages 101 to 111 of *Ulysses*. Bloom's concern when he thinks

And if he was alive all the time? Whew! By Jingo, that would be awful! No, no: he is dead, of course. Of course he is dead. Monday he died. They ought to have some law to pierce the heart and make sure or an electric clock or a telephone in the coffin and some kind of a canvas airhole. Flag of distress . . . (111)

is lifted directly from Poe's "The Premature Burial". After providing several gruesome examples of pre-death burials, the narrator explains that, because of his predilection to fall into trances, he

had the family vault so remodelled as to admit of being readily opened from within. . . . There were arrangements also for the free admission of air and light . . . and suspended from the roof of the tomb, a large bell, the rope of which . . . should extend through a hole in the coffin."

Had he moved beyond an extracted reading, Lovecraft could have enjoyed this passage too, especially when we think of "The Statement of Randolph Carter" and the telephone taken down into a tomb. The horror, it seems, is in the severing of the link between the living and the dead, but the greater terror is in the maintenance of the link because such a link violates natural law.

Kronegger goes on by asserting "the images of symbolist and impressionist writers must be defined through indeterminate incidents, through images that suggest rather than denote, that do not name things but create their atmospheres."<sup>19</sup> Donald Burleson, Steven J. Mariconda, and S. T. Joshi have pointed out brilliantly how deliberate and

16. Kronegger, 35.

17. Kronegger, 14-16.

18. Kronegger, 19.

19. *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, ed. James A. Harrison, 16 vols. (1902; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1965) 5:268-69.

20. Kronegger, 20.

stylistically sophisticated was Lovecraft's mastery of chiasmus, parallelism, syntactical nuances and abstract or subjective adjectives.<sup>21</sup> St. Armand suggests that Lovecraft's work is related in style to Rossetti, Mallarmé, and Wilde because "it is in the quest for a decadent symbology of horror emphasizing the threatening aspects of an alien or obscure nature . . . that all of these artists find their true and mystic brotherhood".<sup>22</sup> Joyce plays with intimations when the stage directions in "Circe" call for the revealing of a jury including "a Nameless One" (470), which Thornton says is an allusion to a James Clarence Mangan poem about "hidden self".<sup>23</sup> Joyce also describes "The lonely house by the graveyard [which] is uninhabited. No soul will live there. . . . The nocturnal rat peers from his hole. A curse is on it. It is haunted" (412). There are rats in these walls. Here is another reason for Lovecraft's attraction had he stayed with the work. We also must think of the riven tomb on which one narrator and his companion sat across from a deserted house outside Arkham.

Kronegger says that one element of Joyce's Poe-influenced style is the "purification of language by synesthesia . . . by evoking the images, with the magic of a musical language in symphonic arrangement".<sup>24</sup> One of Lovecraft's great stylistic strengths examined by Burleson is the poetically musical intricacy of his syntax.<sup>25</sup> Leiber also has pointed out examples of Lovecraft's "orchestrated prose".<sup>26</sup> This is a variation on "reiterated refrain", something Kronegger posits that Joyce picked up from Poe, and that Mangan, mentioned earlier, uses as well; in fact, the "spiritual kinship between Mangan and Poe" which she discusses, is something which Randolph Carter would have appreciated.<sup>27</sup> "Mangan, the artist, spiritually exiled like Poe, is in revolt against actuality and flees from common reality to dreams."<sup>28</sup>

When Kronegger points to the Poe/Joyce fragmentation of "the world of appearances", she suggests that a duality, within the pattern of a cycle, is expressed; that is, "the image of the fissure or crack foreshadows the material or spiritual dissolution of the protagonist".<sup>29</sup> The fissure in Usher's house and Stephen's memory of the whip in *Portrait* are the images of dissolution, the breakdown between "the rational and irrational world order" which are ensconced in a "murky and wavering grey twilight of looming muttering figures", a twilight or "grey mist in Poe's and Joyce's imagery [which] is a characteristic component of states between dreaming and waking, between unreality and reality".<sup>30</sup> Lovecraft employed this motif in *Dream-Quest*'s "great black shapelessnesses", "mists overhead which grew thicker and thicker . . . [until] there was . . . only a weird grey twilight", "slimy snouts jostled and nameless things tittered", "shoals of shapeless lurkers and caperers in darkness, and vacuous herds of drifting entities that pawed" and so on. Joyce unites outer and inner in neo-Gothic fashion when Stephen, in "Wandering Rocks", thinks

Born all in the dark wormy earth, cold specks of fire, evil lights shining in the darkness. Where fallen archangels flung the stars of their brows. Muddy swine-snouts, hands, root and root, gripe and wrest them . . . (241)

The stars are at once manifestations of gods gone awry and the eyes of lowly, rooting brutes. There seem to be rats or vermin among the stars; they are at once the eyes of hideously anthropomorphic beasts and the illumination of inanimate giants in the vastness. Lovecraft employed those rats; Joyce could work a rat as well: "An obese grey rat toddled along the side of the crypt, moving the pebbles. An old stager: greatgrandfather" (114).

21. Donald R. Burleson, "Lovecraft and Chiasmus, Chiasmus and Lovecraft", *Lovecraft Studies* 5, No. 2 (Fall 1986) 72-75; Steven J. Mariconda, "H. P. Lovecraft: Consummate Prose Stylist", *Lovecraft Studies* 3, No. 2 (Fall 1984) 43-51; Steven J. Mariconda, "Notes on the Prose Realism of H. P. Lovecraft", *Lovecraft Studies* 4, No. 1 (Spring 1985) 3-12; S. T. Joshi, *Reader's Guide to H. P. Lovecraft* (Mercer Island, WA: Starmont House, 1982) 62.
22. St. Armand, 41.
23. Thornton, 370.
24. Kronegger, 22.
25. Burleson, 73.
26. Fritz Leiber, Jr., "A Literary Copernicus", in *H. P. Lovecraft: Four Decades of Criticism*, ed. S. T. Joshi (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1980) 57.
27. Kronegger, 23.
28. Kronegger, 23.
29. Kronegger, 32-33.
30. Kronegger, 32-33.

Both Lovecraft and Joyce found literary use in weird images of ancient Egypt. From *Ulysses* we gather these: "A wise tabby, a blinking sphinx" (77), "the land of the Pharaoh" (463), "Omphalos with an obelisk hewn and erected after the fashion of Egypt" (402). Further, Stephen thinks about "Coffined thoughts around me, in mummycases, embalmed in spice of words. Thoth, god of libraries. . . And I heard the voice of that Egyptian highpriest" (193). How morgue-like, in Joyce's prose, is the nature of modern civilization. For him, old conventions are decaying, falling apart. Not only are books and language sealed in coffins, but the modern Irishman finds that his "house is his coffin. Embalming in catacombs, mummies, the same idea" (110). The system is decomposing in its own methods of preservation. Yeats' fowl "pern in a gyre", but for Stephen, and Joyce, "They wheeled, flapping weakly" (153). When we read Lovecraft's letters we find the same sentiment as he considers modern aesthetics.

It is my belief--& was so long before Spengler put his seal of scholarly proof on it--that our mechanical & industrial age is one of frank decadence; so far removed from normal life & ancestral conditions as to make impossible its expression in artistic media. . . We live on memories--& I think that is all we can ever live on now, since mechanical invention has so appallingly divorced us from those conditions of our forefathers around which the aesthetic feelings of the race are entwined. (SL II.103-4.)

Stephen speaks of "the ultimate return" (504). Mircea Eliade sees in Joyce's work, as well as Eliot's, "nostalgia for the myth of eternal repetition and, in the last analysis, for the abolition of time".<sup>31</sup> Given Lovecraft's epistolary position on "CONFLICT WITH TIME" and the life which some of his tales give that position, we can see, in yet another way, what philosophical value he may have found in it. For Lovecraft and Joyce, time is oceanic and reductive, horrible in both its vastness and its threat to organic matter. *Ulysses* is a novel about time and space; time and space occupy one another in Stephen's question "Am I walking into eternity along Sandymount Strand?" (37) It is the element from which one is driven to escape because of its nightmarishness. It can be escaped only through dissolution. "That lies in space which I in time must come to, ineluctably [inevitably]" (217), so a balance of a very shaky sort is established, and a "cemetery [is] put in of course on account of the symmetry" (312). Stephen cannot escape the nightmare of history until he, too, is a corpse in an Irish coffin.

Multiplicity of self comes in the temporary warping of time. Only when Randolph Carter passes through the Ultimate Gate is he voluntarily swept into self-annihilation by what he conceives to be "waves. . . [as if he were in] that vast expanse of surging sea".<sup>32</sup> That this story was written in the early 1930s is most interesting. The imagery and symbolism is evocative, certainly, of Virginia Woolf's *The Waves*, published in 1931. We know already that Lovecraft read something of Woolf's work, so it is not inconceivable that he knew *Orlando* and *The Waves*, or at least knew of them. With this in mind, Harvena Richter's comments are telling. Richter says Woolf examines the multiplicity of self in a variety of ways, among them mirrors (which, we know, Joyce used in *Ulysses*), and a Proustian "splitting of the self into time/memory selves or separate states of consciousness which take place in time and are imaged as separate identities".<sup>33</sup> We can see what Lovecraft might have found of worth in the works of both Joyce and Woolf. Richter goes on that the "swift succession of selves, however, do have a 'Captain self,' a 'key self,' as Orlando observes [*Orlando* p. 279], and which keep the reader feeling that he is at least within a single personality if not a single integrated self".<sup>34</sup> This is, perhaps, the dissolution that, when apprehended and survived, offers the only hope of removal from the nightmare of history, the apprehension that one will reappear, or exist simultaneously in many forms and times.

The time-space notion is treated differently in *Ulysses* and *The Waves*. Lovecraft handled it variously in his Carter stories. His *Dream-Quest* corresponds more to *Ulysses*, as we have seen, in that it is cosmically darker and interested in the escape from conventional time and space through dream. The correspondence is made clearer in Suzette Henke's observation that "Molly escapes from linear time and mentally enclosed space by celebrating the 'ecstatic moment.' She creates her own reality from the experiences of the day-self filtered through the uncensored imagination. . . The artistic faculty of Molly's dream-self [like Carter's] gives birth to fictive worlds."<sup>35</sup>

31. Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974) 153.

32. H. P. Lovecraft, "Through the Gates of the Silver Key", in *MM*, 436.

33. Harvena Richter, *Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970) 113.

34. Richter, 116-17.

35. Suzette Henke, *Joyce's Marvellous Sindbok: A Study of Ulysses* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1978) 9.

Joyce took some inspiration from Poe, but he also called upon the work of Sheridan LeFanu. Examining *Finnegans Wake*, James Atherton says 'The fourth book (in Joyce's father's library of four), LeFanu's *House by the Churchyard*, is one of the major sourcebooks of *Finnegans Wake*.' There are at least two allusions to LeFanu's books in *Ulysses*, says Thornton, one of them being the description of the haunted house deserted by the graveyard which we considered earlier. From Nelson Browne's point of view, 'LeFanu equals, even surpasses, Poe when it comes to creating an atmosphere of stark terror', and Joyce's perception of terror was 'the feeling which arrests us before whatever is grave in human fortunes and unites us with its secret cause,' when 'grave' means 'what is constant and irremediable in human fortunes'.<sup>36</sup>

Clearly, Poe and LeFanu were writers in the same genre, and it only speaks more directly for the influence of that genre on the motifs, images and themes of Joyce that he drew from two of its top writers. Diskin examines their parallel concerns when he suggests that Poe's 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue' of 1841 was drawn from an 1838 tale by LeFanu. 'The parallels between the stories are . . . sufficiently close and sufficiently numerous to allow us to conclude without hesitation that Poe was unconsciously indebted to LeFanu for the idea.'<sup>37</sup>

*Ulysses*, though not written primarily as a Gothic or neo-Gothic novel, is nonetheless replete with the motifs, images and concepts of the genre, if we take Gothicism and its derivatives to be something which 'pursues the infinite in all its manifestations', something that 'reaches toward archaic memories, ancestral remains, and even an original formlessness, and toward the future destruction of death and a chaotic disintegration of order', and something which 'confronts even the danger of formlessness as the consequence of expansion'.<sup>38</sup> Given this working definition, one can see Lovecraft's assessment of the stream-of-consciousness technique as another of the paradoxes which characterize him. As a writer who would have at least one of his protagonists escape time, he might have found the application of this theme a redeeming philosophical tenet in two of the works of Joyce and Woolf.

- 36. James S. Atherton, *The Books at the Wake* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1959) 112.
- 37. Nelson Browne, *Sheridan LeFanu* (New York: Roy Publishers, 1951) 109.
- 38. Patrick Diskin, 'Poe, LeFanu and the Sealed Room Mystery', *Notes and Queries* 13 (1966): 337-39.
- 39. Linda Bayer-Berenbaum, *The Gothic Imagination: Expansion in Gothic Literature and Art* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982) 143-44.

### *Lists and Notes by H. P. Lovecraft*

#### Basic Books for a Weird Library

##### Works of Edgar Allan Poe

Any volume of tales including  
Algernon Blackwood's  
"The Willows"

John Silence--Blackwood  
Incredible Adventures-- "

The House of Souls--Arthur Machen  
The Three Imposters-- "

M. R. James Omnibus

A Dreamer's Tales--Dunsany  
Time & the Gods-- "  
The Sword of Welleran-- "  
The Book of Wonder-- "

## *Robert E. Howard and the Cthulhu Mythos*

By Robert M. Price

### *I. What Is the Lovecraft Mythos?*

Besides his actual stories and the enjoyment and thought they provoke in new generations of readers, H. P. Lovecraft's second greatest legacy to the weird fiction tradition was no doubt the "Cthulhu Mythos", or Lovecraft Mythos. This set of grisly gods and blasphemous books has provided a framework for many horror writers to cut their teeth and work out their writing skills. To understand what the Mythos is, we have to start not with the names and origins of the various deities, but rather with the philosophy underlying it.

Lovecraft was basically a nihilist and a materialist. That is, he felt that there was no reality that natural law and matter could not account for. Everything worked like one big machine. There was no god, no soul, no meaning or purpose. Why, you might wonder, did Lovecraft not kill himself? He did contemplate it from time to time, but what always kept him from it was curiosity and beauty. He felt sure the universe was just a collection of "stuff", but he had to know *more* about it. He hung on the news of the latest discoveries of science. And he felt the world, including some of the creations of humanity, was so beautiful as to make us pause for a lifetime to savor it.

So Lovecraft saw an ultimate void of utter meaninglessness, but he also could no help but see a penultimate world of fascination and beauty. We must understand this in order to understand his major fiction. I think it is fair to say that his major works can be divided into two groups, each of which depicts, as it were, one-half of his worldview.

First, there are the "Dunsanian" or "Dream World" fantasies. In these, the brighter side of Lovecraft's philosophy is uppermost. This is nowhere more clear than in *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, where he "spills the beans" at the story's end. The vista of supreme beauty Randolph Carter has pursued is none other than the New England cities so loved by Lovecraft himself--Salem, Marblehead, Providence, Boston. Yet in this story we are not allowed to forget that the happy and sunny "reality" of the dream-gods is subordinate to "the Other Gods"--blind, mindless, tenebrous monsters, whose ultimate throne is chaos! Every silver cloud, for Lovecraft, has a black and stormy lining!

Second, there are the Mythos tales. Here Lovecraft has taken off the gloves. He means to confront his characters (and his readers) with the awful truth--that the Universe is indifferent to humanity and in its blind, mechanical way will finally crush us as we crush an ant without ever knowing, making us as extinct as the dinosaur. In the stories, these merciless, superhuman forces of nature are symbolized by the "Great Old Ones", Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, Azathoth, Shub-Niggurath, Nyarlathotep. They are going to destroy us, not because they hate us, but because we are in their way.

Lovecraft's characters gradually come to discover their danger by piecing together isolated scraps of knowledge: Armitage decoding Wilbur Whateley's diary and collating it with the *Necronomicon* in "The Dunwich Horror"; Thurston puzzling over his uncle's files and connecting it with an ominous news clipping in "The Call of Cthulhu"; Ward discovering his ancestor Curwen's journal and comparing it with old newspapers and genealogies in

*The Case of Charles Dexter Ward.* Sometimes it is actual scientific or archaeological research which opens the door to oblivion, as in "The Dreams in the Witch House" and *At the Mountains of Madness*.

At any rate, the idea is summed up at the beginning of "The Call of Cthulhu":

The most merciful thing in the world, I think, is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. We live on a placid island of ignorance in the midst of black seas of infinity, and it was not meant that we should voyage far. The sciences, each straining in its own direction, have hitherto harmed us little; but some day the piecing together of dissociated knowledge will open up such terrifying vistas of reality, and of our frightful position therein, that we shall either go mad from the revelation or flee from the deadly light into the peace and safety of a new dark age.

What sort of "scientific revelations" is Lovecraft talking about? Weapons of destruction like the H-Bomb? No, this is to miss his point. He means not the destruction of the world, but the destruction of our worldview. Science would reveal the utter insignificance of humanity's place in the scheme of things. In fact, Lovecraft believed that it already had! He wrote of the disorientation caused by Copernicus and Darwin. Copernicus told us that our home planet was *not* the center of things. We are out on the rim, stuck off on a speck of dust orbiting a middling star in a minor galaxy. Darwin discovered that we are not qualitatively removed from and superior to the animals, as we had always thought. *Homo sapiens*, then, is neither the center nor the ruler of creation, but only a comic biped lost in a cosmic whiff of flotsam and jetsam. This news can be just as shocking and disorienting as Lovecraft said it must be. Witness the struggles of the medieval church to silence Galileo and of today's fundamentalists to combat Darwinism. They are, as Lovecraft said, fleeing into a new dark age of superstition.

Sometimes Lovecraft symbolizes the blind impartiality of the universe as the Old Ones, especially Azathoth. Sometimes there is no threat of destruction by aliens; it is merely knowledge of their existence (as in *At the Mountains of Madness*) that dwarfs us. Sometimes it is knowledge of the frightful secrets of the past that destroys (as in *Charles Dexter Ward* or "The Rats in the Walls").

So, now, what about the Lovecraft mythos?

Lovecraft scholar Dirk W. Mosig has pointed out that the "Yoh-Sothoth Cycle of Myth", as he prefers to call it, refers to a body of *lore*, not a set of *stories*. The various stories all *draw on* this lore (as well as other sources) but they do not *belong to* the Mythos. Many writers and fans have ignored this crucial distinction, and the result has been complete chaos.

Anyway, what elements belong to the Mythos, as Lovecraft knew it? First, there are the gods: Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, Azathoth, Shub-Niggurath, Nyarlathotep. These appear in Lovecraft's own stories. A "second tier" of the pantheon includes Ghatañotha, Rhan-Tegoth, Yig, Nug and Yeb, Gnoph-Keh, Kthun, and Noth-Yidak. These were specially created by Lovecraft for use in his "revision tales", ghost-written for various clients. Then there are the fabled grimoires: the *Necronomicon*, the Phaotic Manuscripts, and *The Seven Cryptical Books of Hsan*.

In his lifetime, Lovecraft witnessed the elaboration of the Mythos by his friends. These (Robert E. Howard, Clark Ashton Smith, Henry Kuttner, Robert Bloch, Frank Belknap Long) sometimes lacked the philosophic punch of Lovecraft, but did keep the basically pessimistic tone.

## II. Enter Robert E. Howard

Robert E. Howard fits into the picture right at this point. Howard's stories represent no slavish imitation of Lovecraft; Howard definitely struck out in his own direction. But where he touches on the Mythos, it rings true.

His overt references to Lovecraftian lore are surprisingly few. In "The Thing on the Roof", "The Fire of Asshurbanipal", and "The Children of the Night", he mentions the *Necronomicon* (it does not appear in the Howard fragment "The House" finished by Derleth as "The House in the Oaks"). In "The Children of the Night" he gives a list of the Old Ones: "Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, Tsathoggua, Gol-goroth" (this last being Howard's own addition to the pantheon, also mentioned in "The Gods of Bal-Sagoth", though not in the Howard portions of the completed fragments "Dagon Manor" or "Black Eons"). "The Fire of Asshurbanipal" lists "Cthulhu and Koth and Yog-Sothoth". Yog-Sothoth and the mysterious planet Yuggoth occur briefly in "Dig Me No Grave", and "the Old Ones", "great Cthulhu", and Yog-Sothoth are all glancingly alluded to in "The Black Bear Bites". Finally, in "Worms of the Earth", Bran Mak Morn swears by the "black gods of R'lyeh". (The references to the star-headed Old Ones and the shoggoths from Lovecraft's *At the Mountains of Madness* that appear in the Cormac Mac Art tale "The Temple of

"Abomination" formed no part of Howard's original fragment; they were added by Richard L. Tierney who completed the tale.)

But simple name-dropping does not a Lovecraftian story make! Something lacking in many contemporary Mythos tales comes through loud and clear in Howard's tales: that dreadful awareness of ultra-worldly Powers who render human existence both tenuous and trite. Even in tales which basically belong to other genres, e.g., heroic fantasy or lost-race stories, this disturbing note creeps in like the distant whispered notes of Il-Lil. We keep hearing of "the terrible black gods of ages past . . . to whom mankind was but a plaything and a puppet", "beings outside the ken of common humanity, foul shapes of transcosmic evil". Two quotations in particular remind us of the anti-human polemic of Lovecraft's *Necronomicon*. "Man was not always master of the earth--and is he now?" ("The Black Stone"). "Before manne was, ye Elder ones were . . . Men see ye tracks of ye talones but not ye feete that make them" ("Dig Me No Grave"). Listen to the *Necronomicon*: "Nor is it to be thought that man is either the oldest or the last of earth's masters . . . The Old Ones were, the Old Ones are, and the Old Ones shall be. . . . Their hand is at your throats, yet ye see Them not. . . ."

Perhaps Howard "got it right" because he had independently come to the same philosophical conclusions as Lovecraft. Reading Howard's tales of Kiowan, Grimlan, and others who have spent years seeking and finding occult realities, it may come as a surprise to read what Howard really thought of such individuals. In a letter to Lovecraft, Howard bemarks the credulity of Lovecraft's revision client William Lumley, who Howard says has "taken refuge from reality in misty imaginings and occult dreams". "There is to me a terrible pathos in a man's vain wanderings on occult paths, and clutching at non-existent things, as a refuge from the soul-crushing realities of life". Stripped of all such comforting illusions, Howard felt, a human being is left "wriggling feebly on the jagged rocks of materiality, dying as any other insect dies, and knowing that he is no divine spirit in tune with some mystic infinity, but only a faint spark of material light, to be extinguished forever in the blackness of the ultimate abyss" (May 24, 1932). That is pure "Lovecraftian orthodoxy".

And like Lovecraft, Howard knew how debilitating it would be to have one's carefully constructed and self-flattering worldview knocked flat like a house of cards by some jolting scientific discovery. "Conrad looked all at sea. He was of that class of scientists who have the universe classified and pigeonholed and everything in its proper little nook. By Jove! It knocks them in a heap to be confronted with the paradoxical-unexplainable-shouldn't-be" ("The Voice of El-Lil").

Not only did H. P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard share a philosophical outlook readily translatable into horror fiction, once one "mythologized" the forces of the cosmos into personal Powers of evil, but once they had done so, their horror stories could look remarkably alike. For instance, compare Lovecraft's "The Nameless City" and Howard's "The Black Stone". In both stories, the protagonists are traveling adventurers who seek out all sorts of curiosities. Lovecraft's quester is hot on the trail of an ancient Arabian city, whispered of in campfire legends. Howard's vagabond cannot rest until he has seen for himself a mysterious obelisk in Hungary, which he has read about in connection with both the demonologist Von Junzt (author of *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*) and the poet Justin Geoffrey. Arriving in the respective vicinity of each, the adventurers pay no heed to the warnings they receive. At the site itself, both find that the object of their quest is a specimen of time-worn masonry, so old as to predate not only any known culture, but the human race itself. And eventually it becomes clear that the stone ruins are merely the tip of the iceberg. They are but the exposed remains of huge subterranean fortresses. Finally, the protagonists of both tales have ghostly visions of the long-dead inhabitants of the caverns below. Lovecraft's visionary sees "a nightmare horde of rushing devils; hate-distorted, grotesquely panoplied, half-transparent devils of a race no man might mistake--the crawling reptiles of the nameless city". Howard's dreamer sees a soundless holograph of a frenzied bloody ceremony presided over by "a huge monstrous toad-like thing [that] squatted on the top of the monolith!" Awakening, both thrill-seekers are suitably frightened out of their wits.

Not only are the plot outlines point-for-point the same, but the stories are even introduced with identical devices. In each case, the narrator knows of a previous dreamer at the same haunted site who preserved his nightmares in verse. Both are even called "the mad poet".

"It was of this place that Abdul Alhazred the mad poet dreamed on the night before he sang his unexplainable couplet:

That is not dead which can eternal lie  
And with strange aeons, even death may die."

("The Nameless City")

"And I suddenly saw a connection between this Stone and a certain weird and fantastic poem written by the mad poet, Justin Geoffrey's *The People of the Monolith*. Inquiries led to the information that Geoffrey had indeed written that poem while travelling in Hungary, and I could not doubt that the Black Stone was the very monolith to which he referred in his strange verse.

They say foul beings of Old Times still lurk  
In dark forgotten corners of the world,  
And Gates still gape to loose, on certain nights,  
Shapes pent in Hell."

("The Black Stone")

Even the word "pent" appears in "The Nameless City" in a parallel context. The lizards evidence "the pent-up viciousness of desolate eternities".

With all these similarities, it is hard to resist the conclusion that Howard borrowed substantially from Lovecraft's earlier story to create "The Black Stone". Yet we know from the publication history of "The Nameless City" that Howard could not have seen Lovecraft's story before he wrote "The Black Stone". The remarkable parallel is all the more remarkable for being spontaneous.

Another startling instance of the two men's eldritch imaginations running along the same course is an unusual image found in both Howard's "Dig Me No Grave" and Lovecraft's *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*. Lovecraft's novella was written about a decade before Howard's story but was never seen by him. In Howard's tale, the sorcerer John Grimlan gloats over his host John Conrad, "Not even in your dreams have you glimpsed the black cyclopean walls of Koth." In Lovecraft's tale, Randolph Carter, on an adventure that takes place in his *dreams*, finds himself at "that hellish tower of Koth with its Cyclopean steps leading to the enchanted wood". Figure that one out.

Other coincidences between Howard and Lovecraft can be more easily explained. The reader may have noticed that in "Dig Me No Grave", Grimlan tauntingly asks Conrad what he knows "of Yog-Sothoth, of Kathulos and the sunken cities?" Who is this "Kathulos"? Is this supposed to be Lovecraft's Cthulhu, spelled in a more pronounceable fashion? Actually, Howard's Kathulos is the same as the title character of his famous novella "Skull Face", a desiccated mummy resurrected ages after the sinking of his native Atlantis. Noting later the similarity in sound to Lovecraft's Cthulhu, Howard suggested that the two might be merged. Lovecraft wrote him back, "It would be amusing to identify your Kathulos with my Cthulhu--indeed, I may so adopt him in some future black allusion" (August 14, 1930). Lovecraft did drop the name in a list of occult gibberish in "The Whisperer in Darkness", right next to another Howardian name: "L'mur-Kathulos, Bran", but it was Howard who finally identified his Atlantean magus with Lovecraft's monster from R'lych in "Dig Me No Grave".

### III. *Nameless Cults*

The most important instance of playful borrowing between Lovecraft and Howard was the creation of the "Black Book", *Nameless Cults* by Friedrich Wilhelm Von Junzt. (Lovecraft provided Von Junzt's first and middle names, and August Derleth supplied the German "original" of the title, *Unaussprechlichen Kulten*.) This tome of soul-blasting blasphemy appears in "The Children of the Night", "The Black Stone", "The Thing on the Roof", and Howard's portion of "Black Eons" (though the Von Junzt quote heading that story is not Howard's; also, the book appears only in Derleth's portion of "The House in the Oaks").

*Nameless Cults* is obviously Howard's analogue to Lovecraft's *Necronomicon*. This is not only true of the conception of the book as a whole, but even of all of the intriguing details. The plausible and detailed publishing history of *Nameless Cults* is probably derived straight from similar data in Lovecraft's mock essay "History of the Necronomicon", penned in 1927 and sent around to correspondents including Clark Ashton Smith, Willis Conover, and probably Howard. Howard even shows himself familiar with details of Lovecraft's essay when he twice refers to "the original Greek translation" of the *Necronomicon*.

The shocking and mysterious death of Von Junzt, his throat torn by invisible talons in a locked and bolted room, recalls the similar death of *Necronomicon* scribe Abdul Alhazred, who was "seized by an invisible monster in broad daylight and devoured horribly before a large number of fright-frozen witnesses", a grisly fate narrated only in "History of the Necronomicon".

## *Swan Songs: Lovecraft and Yeats*

By Donald R. Burleson, Ph.D.

The swan, being quite possibly the most beautiful living thing in the world, has long inspired poets. Both H. P. Lovecraft and William Butler Yeats (whom Lovecraft in 1929 declared to be "the greatest poet alive today"--SL II.322) wrote poems about swans: Lovecraft's "On Receiving a Picture of Swans" (given in a letter of 14 September 1915 to Rheinhart Kleiner: SL I.12-13), Yeats' "Leda and the Swan" (*Selected Poems and Two Plays of William Butler Yeats*; New York: Collier Books, 1962, pp. 114-15). (Yeats also wrote a poem titled "The Wild Swans at Coole", which we will not examine here.) The point here is not to argue any sort of "influence" in the traditional sense; such influence would be out of the question anyway, since Lovecraft's poem precedes that of Yeats (which dates from 1924) by some nine years, and since Yeats is exceedingly unlikely to have seen Lovecraft's poem (or to have been influenced by it even if he had), which appeared in print for the first time in 1916 in *The Conservative*, in the amateur press, and was reprinted only in other similarly off-the-track sorts of places. Neither is the point to compare the two poems in valuational or qualitative terms; certainly Lovecraft's poem, from the standpoint of traditional prosodic criticism, is, though, technically competent, stylistically and conceptually inferior to that of Yeats, as Lovecraft would no doubt have been quick to own. Rather, the point here is to graft or splice the two works together, forming a single text or intertext, and to see how this coalesced text comments upon itself. The two poems, as we shall see, weave themselves together quite deftly, whether we wish them to or not. And of course any notion of "authorial intent" (depending as it does upon a suspect metaphysics of "presence") has nothing to do with anything; the poems are public documents, and like all texts they lead a linguistic life of their own, perpetually writing themselves by being read.

Both poems employ well-known strains of myth. Lovecraft's work employs the myth of Phaëton and Cygnus: "With pensive grace, the melancholy Swan/Mourns o'er the tomb of luckless Phaëton;/On grassy banks the weeping poplars wave,/And guard with tender care the wat'ry grave." Phaëton, as one recalls, was the son of Helios, and, prevailing upon his father to be allowed to drive the fiery chariot across the sky but bungling the job, was dashed by Zeus into the sea, where a faithful friend, changed by Zeus into a swan, watches over the grave (in some accounts, from the sky, as the constellation Cygnus). The poem's persona comments: "Would that I might, should I too proudly claim/An Heavenly parent or a God-like fame,/When flown too high, and dashed to depths below,/Receive such tribute as a Cygnus' woe!" The work concludes: "The faithful bird, that dumbly floats along,/Sighs all the deeper for his want of song."

In decided contrast to this quiet poetic tonality, Yeats' poem deals in brutally striking fashion with the myth of the rape of Leda by Zeus in the form of a swan: "A sudden blow: the great wings beating still/Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed/By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,/He holds her helpless breast upon his breast." The poem proceeds with rhetorical (very effectively rhetorical) questions: "How can these terrified vague fingers push/The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?/And how can body laid in that white rush,/But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?" Yeats gives us a glimpse of the progeny to issue from this encounter: "A shudder in the loins engenders there/The broken wall, the burning roof and tower/And Agamemnon dead." (This passage refers, of course, to the identities of Leda's children: Pollux, Helen--over whom the siege of Troy was to proceed--Castor, and

Clytemnestra, who was to become the wife and murderer of Agamemnon.) The poem concludes by raising an unanswerable question obsessively present in Yeats' work generally: "Being so caught up,/So mastered by the brute blood of the air,/Did she put on his knowledge with his power/Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?"

From the beginning, in this intertext, the swan, however beautiful a bird, is a repository of duplicity, deception, ambiguity, indeterminacy, mystery, uncertainty of identity. The duplicity ranges far beyond the simple fact that the textual swan is always someone else in disguise (though this fact alone begins to weave the two poems together). The swan is deceptive and ambiguous and even ironic in its very naming; the word *swan* derives from the Indo-European root *swen-*, meaning "to sound", whence the Latin *sonus* and such English derivatives as "sound", "sonnet", "sonata", "sonorous"; whence also the Germanic form *swanaz*, "singer", similar to the form *sangwaz* (Indo-European *sangwh-*) from which derives "song". But of course the swan (excepting such varieties as the trumpeter swan, whose presence merely heightens the growing ambiguity) is traditionally understood to be mute; there is a legend to the effect that it sings sweetly just before dying, whence the expression "swan song", but even if the legend were true, this singing would only serve to underscore the swan's traditional muteness. The orange-billed white swan of ornamental ponds and streams has an ability to charm that is of the eye, is a mute ability, suggesting *mutability*, capacity for change, propensity for metamorphosis, polysemy, sign-play.

Indeed, in spoken French *le Cygne* (from the Latin *cygnum*, which, interestingly enough, has been used metonymically for "poet", a fusion, as it were, of bird and bard, Lovecraft and Yeats being, by suggestion if not by accurate account, bards of a feather) is indistinguishable from *le signe*: sign, token, emblem, symbol. (Similarly, in English, one has the homonyms *Cygnets* and *signet*.) We enter here, in earnest, the dizzying world of language; the swan partakes of the polysemic and protean nature of the linguistic sign, which is shifting, spongelike, and given to free play of signification. The swan (which, as Lovecraft says, "dumbly floats along") is quite graphically a *floating signifier*, a cygnaire burning with linguistic potential: Yeats' swan burns with lust, Lovecraft's Cygnus in the sky (which the stream reflects just as it reflects the floating swan, so that it little matters whether one sees the swan as upon the water or as ensconced in the sky) flickers with dispersed signification. The floating signifier floats "dumbly" not because it is bereft of meaning, but rather because its meanings are forever plural, incompletely determined, disseminated, deferred, incapable of being pinned down to any reductive view of content.

Useful connexions continue as one looks farther afield. A male swan is called a "cob", suggestive of corn, fertility, fecundity both of sexual procreation and of semiotic play; a female swan is a "pen", suggestive of writing, signs, textuality, though also (at first glance somewhat paradoxically) of enclosures, borderings, framings that are impossible in that all textual "borders" are eventually overrun. The imagery of enclosure in the female element of this observation suggests also, however, self-subversion of the image, in that the female enclosure is the womb, and as such is ultimately antithetical to the notion of enclosure, leading, as it does, to open proliferation, spillings-over of borders, outsideness, multiplicity, promulgation of life, and textual dispersion of meaning, from which we are led back to "pen" in the other sense mentioned. As usual, the swan abounds in plurality and problematical content of the sign (*cygne*). (Lovecraft's line "When flown too high, and dashed to depths below" sounds less like a reference to the myth of Phaeton than to the myth of Icarus--a myth appropriation--and one recalls that Icarus' father was Daedalus, builder of the labyrinth. Labyrinthine sign-play and semantic dispersion abound. In Daedalus there are even echoes of James Joyce and endless vistas of labyrinthine language. One stands ever at the edge of the abyss.)

In another linguistic connexion it should be mentioned that the Chinese term for "swan" is the two-syllable, two-character combination *t'ian-o*, literally "heavenly(ly) boose," suggesting (in *t'ian*, "heaven" or "sky") the divine identity of Yeats' swan as Zeus. The Chinese monosyllable *o* in the form of a written character meaning "goose" consists of two parts, a semantic element made up of *n'iao* ("bird") and a phonetic element *wo* meaning "I" when it is used as a character unto itself, so that the swan is the heavenly I-bird, raising questions anew of identity, appearance versus reality, subterfuge, disguise, irony (I-rony). With this phonetic element *wo* in the written Chinese for "swan" (which even in English almost appears: *swan*), we may be rather startled to see Lovecraft's text refer to "a Cygnus' woe". The ludic nature of language and textuality continues to be amazingly uncontainable.

The two poems, considered as if they were separate "texts", present high contrast from the beginning. Lovecraft's swan is woeful, faithful, melancholy, mournful, sighing, silent; Yeats' swan is lustful, brutal, powerful, indifferent. Yet by this time, with the problematical swan, one expects duplicity, and, again from the beginning, the contrast begins linguistically to unravel itself.

It is not without significance that Lovecraft, in his first line, capitalises the noun: "swan". (This is no mere device of pseudo-archaism; the Lovecraft text could capitalise other such nouns farther on--"fame", "tribute", etc.--but does not.) The noun, thus written, acquires overtones of being godlike, thus beginning to resemble Yeats' swan, who

is, of course, Zeus self-metamorphosed. Other and stronger intimations in the same direction come later, but first we observe other ways in which the two poems weave themselves to make intertext.

Lovcraft's swan (*Swan*) mourns "o'er the tomb of luckless Phaëton", and we may note that *tomb* derives from an Indo-European root *teue-*, from which spring not only such words as "tumescence" (suggesting sexual arousal and pointing away toward the Yeats text) but also, through a derivative Germanic form, "thigh"--Yeats' text mentions Leda's thighs twice in the first six lines. It would seem, in the free interplay of language, that the two swans' objects of concern are not so unrelated after all. (Leda's thighs, to speak metonymically, will lead to death, will fill tombs.) There are similarities more evident on the level of motif and theme; Lovcraft's swan attends upon death itself, upon Phaëton's "wat'ry tomb"; Yeats' swan seemingly antithetically dispenses life, but this life is ultimately death: Helen, Agamemnon; not to mention Castor and Pollux, the twins, where the motif of twins suggest again double vision, ambiguity of being, duplicity, multiplicity, polysemy--death of identity. Indeed, even the sexual imagery in Yeats' text reminds us that the sex act in its consummation has often been characterised as a "little death", a symbolic death actively sought by Zeus as swan. And in Lovcraft's final line, if one reads, in the swan's "want of song", the sense of desire in "want", rather than *lack* (the two being closely allied anyway), and if one recalls that song, in legendary terms, means an impending end for the swan, then again the two swans coincide, in inviting death.

We return to the question of the divinity of the swan, noting here and later that the intertext comments interestingly upon its own operations of coalescence. *Swan*, as has been noted, derives from the Indo-European *swen-*, but this root is also a variant form of *sawel-*, "sun", whence (by way of the form *sawel-yo-*) the Greek *helios*, and we arrive at Helios, god of the sun and father to Phaëton in Lovcraft's poem, where, then, Phaëton's friend-as-swan partakes of divinity; he is not merely the *son* of a god as Phaëton is, but identified with that god himself. (Note that in the previous sentence, "himself" may refer either to Phaëton's friend or to Helios. The intertext's twistings of signification invade the critical language as well, as is inevitable, since, after all, criticism of text is yet more text.) The swan texts continue to weave themselves together; Lovcraft's swan, in emerging from the web of language with divine content, is echoic of Yeats' swan, already a god in disguise.

What has happened is that the Yeats aspect of the intertext has invaded the Lovcraft text; Lovcraft's swan has acquired associations characteristic of Yeats' swan. The Yeats text penetrates, "rapes" Lovcraft's text, as it were, as Zeus has raped Leda; the Yeats text is found embedded within the Lovcraft text. For Yeats, the object of the sexual assault is Leda; if Yeats' text effects the rape of Leda, and penetrates or violates the Lovcraft text as well, then the Lovcraft text (as victim of seduction) acquires an association with Leda, producer of Helen, Pollux, Castor, Clytemnestra. But then, since these things are found within the Yeats text, the associational implication is that the Lovcraft text is found there as well. The Yeats text contains that which it invades; the inclusion is mutual, and the effect is textual coalescence. The works weave themselves together; they reside within each other, producing what Coleridge or his descendants the New Critics might have been justified in calling "organic unity"--albeit a unity that, as we are in the process of seeing, perpetually scintillates with differences, so that the text differs with itself even over the question of whether and how it differs with itself. Yet interwoven it is.

And there is textual self-reference to this weaving, specifically. Again, one can find that the intertext, just as it has spoken of semiotic plurality, comments upon its own operations with regard to the formation of the intertext itself.

Yeats' third line has "By the dark web. . ." *Web* is from the Indo-European *webh-*, "to weave", "to waffle", i.e., to move back and forth as in weaving. Yeats' text later refers to the Zeus-swan's "feathered glory", and aside from the fact that this is a figural reference to sexuality, one notes that *feather* derives from the root *pet-*, "to rush". (Also, a derivative is the Greek *potamos*, "river": flowing, dissemination, and Lovcraft's swan-inhabited stream.) *Rush* leads us on to Yeats' seventh line, where we find Leda's body "laid in that white rush". Here, *rush* (meaning both a quick access and a body of aquatic plants, and suggesting also *ruse*, duplicity) derives from the root *re2q-*, "to weave", "to plait", and we are led back once again to the imagery of weaving. The "feathered glory" partakes of a glorious weaving of intertext and plural semiology. Dissemination of text and of meaning, dissemination in its connotations of sexual proliferation--all are mutually plaited. (*Plaist* in French means "it pleases", and as usual, the intertext does what it pleases.)

A weaving together of the texts of course implies the taking down of any illusory boundaries between them, and Yeats' imagery leads even to this. "The broken wall, the burning roof and tower. . ." The walls indeed come down, walls between "different" texts; the passage, further, attacks speciously privileged "structure" in general--the "walls" and "towers" of structures that parade themselves in texts as if they could not be deconstructed, the "walls" dividing things not ultimately to be divided. (As Yeats has elsewhere reminded us, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold.") "And Agamemnon dead"--Agamemnon (as king of Mycenae) is regality, regulation, fixity (paradoxically, he is instrumental in destroying Troy and taking down structures himself); as regulatory power

purporting to be final, to be structurally the last word in textual "meaning", he perishes--by the doings of a god, as Lovecraft's Phaeton has perished. Yet the text here again is self-subversive, in that with Agamemnon's regulative nature it is textual death--prohibition of linguistic free play--that has perished. Boundaries come down so that they can be reinscribed so that they can come down again, in perpetuity. (Boundaries and walls and structural "towers" are destroyed, yet within *destroyed* one still finds *Troy*.) We have aporia, irresolvable oscillation--again, waffling, both in the sense of weaving and of oscillating or alternation.

Yeats' text asks, of Leda, "How can those terrified vague fingers push/The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?" *Vague* is a curious word here; it derives, of course, from the Latin *vagus*, "wandering", but also, on the descriptive level, makes Leda sound more like the swan than like herself; swans have vague (webbed) "fingers". Yeats elsewhere has made such a connexion, in another poem: "And I though never of Ledaean kind/Had pretty plumage once...." Leda is made to look like the swan: she is a *picture* of a swan, and we are back to Lovecraft's very title; Lovecraft's text has received a picture of a swan, and therefore becomes its own persona: its "I"--a self-screeing eye--is self-referential. True to the sense of "wandering" in the etymology of "vague", Leda and the Yeats text have been true vagabonds, have wandered over the smoking rubble of the demolished "boundary" into Lovecraft's text once again.

One could pursue these matters endlessly, wandering, as a vagabond oneself, among the labyrinthine and sprawling lanes of language, searching out differential traces of meaning in the quantum field of free-playing signification. Suffice it to conclude here by saying that the "separate" texts of Lovecraft and Yeats, in weaving themselves together quite uncontrollably, provide as intriguing a picture as one could want--in terms of the vagaries of *le signe* as well as of *le cygne*--of the subversive working of texts beyond any notion of their intentional "origins". (One must ask: if we as a legion of readers cannot control the ludic and mysterious flickerings of sign-play, then how could an author hope to do so?) As critical theorist Terry Eagleton has reminded us, "It is language which speaks in literature, in all its swarming 'polysemic' plurality, not the author himself". In this case, the authors themselves. Authors in any event share production of a text with its readers and with the disseminative power of language itself--and, well, authors die, both figuratively and in biological fact; authors fade from the scene. Textual dissemination goes on; texts continue to live and thrive, even when they are swan songs.

#### Briefly Noted

Stephen J. Pyne's *The Ice: A Journey to Antarctica*, first published in 1986 by University of Iowa Press, has now been issued in paperback by Ballantine Books (September 1988; \$4.95). In this book about the topography and natural history of Antarctica, Pyne devotes several pages to a summary and analysis of *At the Mountains of Madness*. Although some of Pyne's interpretations are questionable, it is good to see Lovecraft's work cited as a matter of course in a major scientific work.

Frank Belknap Long's *Howard Phillips Lovecraft: Dreamer on the Nightside* (1975) has been translated into French by Stephane Bourgois as *H. P. Lovecraft: Le Conteur des tenebres* (Amiens: Encrage, 1987). Also included is a translation of Robert Bloch's "Heritage of Horror" (used as the introduction to the revised edition of *The Dunwich Horror and Others*). This attractively produced hardcover edition also features many finely reproduced photographs of Lovecraft and his associates, covers of his books, and facsimiles of letters and other documents.

To commemorate Lovecraft's centennial in 1990, David E. Schultz and S. T. Joshi have assembled an anthology of original essays on Lovecraft by the leading figures in the field. Aside from original works by the editors, the volume includes articles by Donald R. Burleson, Kenneth W. Faig, Jr., Peter Cannon, Stefan Dziemianowicz, Robert M. Price, Jason C. Eckhardt, Steven J. Mariconda, Robert H. Waugh, R. Boorem, Norman L. Gayford, Barton L. St Armand, and Will Murray. Also included is an extensive annotated bibliography of writings by and about Lovecraft. Publication of the volume should occur very close to the actual centennial date of August 20, 1990.

## *The Last of H. P. Lovecraft*

By J. B. Michel

[Reprinted from *The Science Fiction Fan* 4, No. 4 (Whole No. 39) (November 1939) 3-7.--Ed.]

I never knew H. P. Lovecraft.

He died at a time when I had approached the point of writing to him in connection with some allusions of his to a story of mine which appeared in a certain issue of *The Californian* magazine.

The total sum of knowledge concerning this remarkable man came then and comes now from Donald A. Wollheim who had something more than a nodding acquaintance with him. In all of his observations of the great writer I detected a note of colossal respect, an invisible, hidden obeisance to the mind (and later) to the memory of the man whom Robert W. Lowndes has called "the last great bourgeois philosopher".

Aside from these comments and sundry other observations, Lovecraft to me was always a great dark, legendary being, swathed in the folds of long-gone centuries, a man of whose actual existence in our times I was never too certain. When the round-table talk turned to him in the few months before his death this impression grew upon me. But when Wollheim proposed to a group of interested people his plan to save Lovecraft from being corresponded to death by the plethora of fans deluging him with mail, I suddenly became aware of him as a very much alive personality.

It is my ill luck never to have met him personally. But I am content with the few final impressions I have preserved of Lovecraft, the memory of two rooms in an ancient house in Providence, R. I., buried in the stately past that Lovecraft loved and to which he escaped from a world he never quite knew or understood, a harsh, cruel, cellophane-wrapped planet born too suddenly out of the soft hand-kissing ways of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Wollheim and I went to Providence for the purpose of visiting that house which even then had begun to be regarded as something of a shrine.

The city exuded an atmosphere so tangible that I felt it almost immediately [once] we had left the train. From all sides about us low hills rose slantingly to the horizons. We stood in a sort of cup-shaped hollow and the town climbed about us in row on row of ancient, red-brick structures, with only the suggestion of a modern building or two in the business district.

It is a place of no especial rush and hurry. Except for the roaring railroad terminal it might very well have been just another country town lost somewhere in the hills. Civilization does not seem to have changed its soul. It is a town of tradition. We walked along "College" streets and "Pine" streets and "Market" streets, all lined with tall and stately trees. On our journey up the slope toward the great college in whose vicinity stands the Lovecraft home we met hardly another soul. On a sleepy Sunday, Providence is very still, very majestic and clean and white.

The house was a perfect frame for the life of the man who once lived in it. Shut off from direct view of the sloping street by a bend in a long, brick-walled alley, it hid from the large imposing library building beside it, the waving branches of trees surrounding it like upthrust arms warding off the threat of absorption into a busy, moving world. We stood before it at last and gazed down the hill through the quiet, still air.

To the eye, the house, the town, the trees and the sky was a frozen world of wax, and faded, imprisoned color. Steeples and gables of forgotten years filled the whole, circling horizon.

Lovecraft's aunt, Mrs. Gamwell, met us at the door. She was a very sweet lady, not long past middle age with an aura of crinoline and bouquets of violets and old lace about her. We walked up a flight of narrow stairs together. She took our hats, ushered us down a short corridor and into a large room.

Suddenly I realized why Lovecraft had withered outside it.

It was an artist's studio, minus the huge-slanting windows, but very reminiscent of the conventional, a low-ceilinged, broad and long sort of room with its walls and floor bathed in sunlight that poured in a flood of rich gold through quaintly curtained windows and half-hidden embrasures.

It was of another set of years, a dust collector of the traditions, tastes and substance of a particularly nostalgic section of the past when Poe wandered about the back streets and hill back alleys of this place.

A lot of oddly assorted moods and atmosphere seemed to have caught on its gingerbread character as it plowed through decades.

Plants and growing tendrils filled whole corners. Lovecraft's desk, set against the north west window was untouched. His pencils, pens, blotting paper, instruments of writing and many scraps of note paper lay as though the author had left but for an instant.

Large squares of brilliant sunlight caught the desk-top in an interlocking web of light as the light came through the window, throwing the low-backed, angular chair behind it into polished relief. The window itself was wreathed in growths of vines and brightly colored flowers. It was the cheeriest spot in the room.

Outside it was mahogany gloom, scarred and heavy with shadows where the golden sunlight did not lay.

Mrs. Gamwell touched a photograph of Robert H. Barlow laying on a small, wicker-work table.

"He's a dear boy," she breathed.

We talked for many minutes. She told us of her nephew's last days, his dry humor and his indifference as death approached. He had gone out of the world in scorching agony, the victim of an obscure but malignant disturbance of the digestive organs. As she spoke it seemed as though he had died bereft of his friends but secure in the embrace of the past he clung to even in death.

We saw a new phase of Lovecraft through her words, an eager, boyish side, impulsive, even rash. Through her weaving it was easy to imagine him sitting wrapped in an old bathrobe on the spiderish chair before his desk, writing, a Voltaire sans smarting sarcasm and biting rhetoric.

There was another room, a small one, its door almost invisible amongst a wilderness of large chromos and hard-stacked bookcases. It was his bedroom, replete with countless tiny *objets d'art*, sculptures and paintings by Barlow, old prints and bits of glass. We lingered in it only a moment. It was repulsive, dingy, unrelieved by light.

Then for awhile we were alone.

Donald prowled, fingering the bindings of the books, that lay in the interminable rows of shelves by the hundreds. He glanced at them hungrily with the eye of the collector. I stalked about uneasily, ferreting out atmosphere, fingering gingerly smallish plaster sculptures by Clark Ashton Smith sneering somewhat at the air of faded primness and retreat that permeated the house. But as the afternoon wore on I felt a sympathy with the room, with its late occupant, growing. For a very little while I felt very close to Lovecraft. It didn't seem incongruous then, the identity in my mind of the austere, mature giant of literature and myself a very young and very immature man, callow, brash and filled with ignorant contempts.

The mood passed. I saw again, in a light of mixed sympathy and disinterest the tumbled heaps of papers, the dirty, endless rows of books, ancient tomes and manuscripts, cracked with age, the dusty futile remnants of a life.

What a charming anachronism the house was! It does not belong in this world and it cannot long remain. It faded romantically into a twilit distance as we left, lost in a horde of other houses wrapped in vines lit ruddy by the sun. I remember saying something then to Wolheim about his luck to have known Lovecraft. But I am not sure of my own desires upon that point. I am not too envious, even now that the distance of the years increases the stature of the author, of the group of people who knew him intimately, Barlow, Long, Campbell, Derleth, Loveman and others.

Lovecraft, for all his giant knowledge and piercing, calculating intellect, was the deadly enemy of all that to me is everything, an inflexible Jehovah-man, a gaunt, prophet-like high priest of dark rites and darker times, clad in funereal robes and funereal visage, gazing with suppressed hate upon a great new world which placed more value upon the sanitary condition of a bathroom fixture than all the greasy gold and jewels. The bones and dirt-crushed half knowledge of a thousand and a thousand-thousand kingdoms of the hoary past, whose faithful chronicle he was and in which he lived.

## Reviews

**PETER CANNON.** *H. P. Lovecraft*. Twayne's United States Authors Series No. 549. Boston: Twayne Publishers/ G. K. Hall (70 Lincoln Street, Boston, MA 02111), June 1989. c. 150 pp. \$18.95 hc.  
(Toll-free customer service number: 1-800-343-2806.)

Reviewed by S. T. Joshi, Donald R. Burleson, David E. Schultz, and Frank Belknap Long, with a reply by Peter Cannon.

The history of this book is extremely bizarre. Dirk W. Mosig, the father of modern Lovecraft studies, was assigned the task of writing it in 1975; but, after dawdling for years under the burden of too many other commitments, abandoned the project. He wished Donald R. Burleson to take over the work (just as Mosig recommended that I write the lesser *Reader's Guide to H. P. Lovecraft* for Starmont House), but G. K. Hall passed Burleson over and assigned it instead to Barton L. St Armand--no doubt on the questionable belief that St Armand, a more conventionally acceptable academic, could carry out the task more satisfactorily. St Armand, himself withdrawing from the field, gave up the assignment around 1984, and eventually it devolved upon Peter Cannon.

In the end we can say, without offence to anyone, that no better candidate could have been chosen. Mosig, although vastly learned, would probably have written an effusively praiseworthy work making dubious claims as to Lovecraft's merits as writer and thinker. Burleson had already written his *H. P. Lovecraft: A Critical Study* (1983) for Greenwood Press, and it would have been a squandering of his talents had he been compelled to write another handbook for students. Burleson should now concentrate his efforts on a more technical and higher-scale study for scholars--and this in fact is exactly what he is doing. I myself have lost all interest in writing another book analogous to my *Reader's Guide*, and am now at work on a lengthy philosophical study of Lovecraft for Starmont House. There are several other scholars in the field--David E. Schultz and Steven J. Mariconda are only two--who could have written this book; but only Cannon occupies the unique position being both in the field and outside it. A look at any page of Cannon's notes to this book will show how thoroughly he has absorbed current Lovecraft scholarship (as, for example, St Armand has not), citing things so obscure as amateur press fanzines. But Cannon, who has a strong academic and publishing background, is no mere devotee or uncritical admirer; and his knowledge of the wider world of literature allows him to give Lovecraft his rightful, perhaps somewhat humble, place in American and world literature. When Cannon writes that "Lovecraft needs to gain a wider audience outside the genre", he may be referring subconsciously, but entirely aptly, to readers like himself.

Everything in this book--from the chronology to the bibliography--is sane, balanced, accurate, and comprehensive. No better introduction to Lovecraft has could ever been written, and perhaps ever be written. The opening biographical chapter is the most concentrated and succinct thing of its kind I have ever read, and--aside from a curious silence on Lovecraft's marriage, never dealt with thoroughly anywhere in this book--brings Lovecraft to life in a few pages more vividly than L. Sprague de Camp did in his entire biography.

Cannon has adopted some unconventional structural methods in his book, notably the arrangement of Lovecraft's work not so much chronologically as "geographically". This method has much to recommend it, but also results in some anomalies. Cannon's categorisation of Lovecraft's early work under the thematic rubrics of "The Past", "The Sea", "Below", "Beyond", "Dreamland", and "Decadence" is ingenious and brings to light significant patterns in the early tales, but the gradual development of Lovecraft's mastery of technique is somewhat obscured. We read about "The Lurking Fear" (1922) before we read about "Herbert West--Reanimator" (1921-22), and Lovecraft's considerable advance in plotting is not made evident. Moreover, Cannon later discusses *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* before *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*, evidently unaware that the latter's repudiation of the dream-world led directly to the paean to the realities of New England life and history in the former.

A more serious flaw in this book is that Cannon does not seem to have any overall view of the purpose or direction of Lovecraft's work. In criticising Burleson's critical study (perhaps rightly) for excessive plot synopses, Cannon ignores the fact that much of his own book is open to the same charge. The book gets so bogged down in summarising and analysing each and every story Lovecraft wrote--something Cannon does, admittedly, with great adeptness, quoting just those portions of the tales that highlight their important features--that we have trouble ascertaining what Lovecraft's work is really adding up to. Cannon in fact does not seem to have an especially lofty

view of Lovecraft; there is nothing intrinsically wrong with this, but to call Lovecraft merely "one of America's greatest literary eccentrics" seems a little shabby. Cannon tries to bolster Lovecraft's standing by comparing him with recognised authors, including Hawthorne, Melville, Faulkner, O'Neill, and others; but this sort of thing--especially a somewhat grotesque comparison of "Out of the Aeons" with Evelyn Waugh--may backfire by appearing unintentionally comic. This is not the way to exalt Lovecraft's status. Cannon's very brief concluding chapter does not encapsulate Lovecraft's achievement--as we might have expected and wanted--but cursorily studies the vicissitudes of his critical acceptance. Here Lovecraft is compared implausibly to Conan Doyle as an author appealing to "juvenile" tastes--something that completely overlooks the fact that Lovecraft's work has a philosophical depth and richness entirely absent in that of *Sherlock Holmes'* creator.

There is a further want of proportion in the relative amount of space given to Lovecraft's early and late work. No one would deny that Lovecraft's stories up to 1926 are on the whole undistinguished (Cannon himself calls them "apprentice" work); but Cannon devotes some 40 pages to these tales, and only 60 to the later, longer narratives. His study of nearly all the later tales is unsatisfactory, and the analysis stops just when we are expecting it to begin. There is so much more to be said about these tales, and Cannon surely has so many valuable insights to offer, that we cannot but wish he had compressed the early chapters and lengthened the later ones.

Cannon is curiously insensitive to some of Lovecraft's intentions. In particular he fails to note the self-parodic humour of "Herbert West--Reanimator" and "The Hound", and also the double-edged satire in "The Terrible Old Man", which is no hostile snarl at aliens (as Cannon, echoing de Camp, believes) but is as much a send-up of "the charmed circle of New England life and traditions" as it is an attack on foreigners. Cannon's own predilections are not hidden in this book, either: he has always been fond of "The Dunwich Horror"; but, without adopting Burleson's notion that it is a satire, he can only conclude lamely that "the tale . . . ranks among his strongest, by virtue of its high level of excitement and suspense". Well, on such criteria we must give Robert Ludlum and Sidney Sheldon high marks as literary artists. Conversely, Cannon's dislike of "The Night Ocean" leads him to ignore the documentary evidence of Lovecraft's involvement in it and to place it outrageously with Derleth's "posthumous collaborations", while his somewhat embarrassing fondness for the confused "Medusa's Coil" makes him remark soberly that it "merits more critical scrutiny than it has hitherto received". Perhaps "Ashes" does also.

And yet, aside from being a valuable guide to the undergraduate, graduate student, or even professor interested in commencing a study of Lovecraft, this book offers some new insights. Cannon is undoubtedly right in detecting the narrator's friend in "Hypnos" as a thinly disguised Edgar Allan Poe (although what we are to make of this, neither Cannon nor I can imagine); he remarks with great acuity that the "three members [of the Whateley family in "The Dunwich Horror"] may be viewed as grotesque parodies of his grandfather, his mother, and himself"; and he points out a number of obvious parallels between *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, something which at any rate never penetrated my thick wits before. A footnote studying examples of "latch" imagery in Lovecraft could be the nucleus of an article similar to Cannon's own "Sunset Terrace Imagery".

Cannon is almost excessively generous in acknowledging his fellow scholars in the field. This is useful in alerting the novice to how much has been written on Lovecraft in non-academic sources, but it leads Cannon to cite even the dubious work of John Taylor Gatto and Darrell Schweitzer. And there are some slips: he credits James Egan's undistinguished *Extrapolation* article of 1982 for the view that "The Dunwich Horror" is an obvious parody of the Immaculate Conception, but Maurice Lévy had made the point more cogently a decade before; and Cannon states that Joel Manton in "The Unnamable" may be a disguised version of Maurice W. Moe, forgetting that I first made this identification in my old "Autobiography in Lovecraft". (This is no doubt an oversight, as Cannon otherwise cites my work far more often than he should have, and does not cite his own previous writing to the degree it deserves.)

The majority of the above remarks are of the nature of quibbles; any book would be open to them. I cannot reiterate strongly enough how thoroughly professional in every sense is this work; it is a credit to G. K. Hall, to Lovecraft, and to Peter Cannon. As we approach Lovecraft's centennial, we shall see an increasing number of distinguished works on Lovecraft by leading scholars; as the first important contribution to this great celebration, this volume can take its place as a thorough, challenging work that cannot be ignored. There is more meat in this book than in anything of comparable size in the field.

--S. T. Joshi

Well--after seemingly "strange aeons" of assignment and reassignment of the volume, there is finally a Twayne book on Lovecraft. This alone will not suffice to establish that Lovecraft has really "arrived" as a major American writer, since the Twayne series includes volumes on some astonishingly inconsequential writers--but for there *not* to be a Twayne *Lovecraft* has always been an insult.

My reactions are mixed. Overall, Peter Cannon has done a creditable job of treating Lovecraft in the tradition of the Twayne series--which is to say, with biographical coverage of factual accuracy and with light criticism that does not strike one as being, in general, wrongheaded. (One does not expect any extreme "close-reading" sort of deep criticism in the Twayne books; they function, rather, to provide general introduction and conventional commentary not redolent of any sharply defined "school" of criticism and not aspiring to be profound.) At times I agree, at times disagree with the assessments that Cannon makes of the stories; such, of course, is the nature of the world of criticism, where any universal agreement would imply textual univocality: the very death of the text.

In his discussions of the early tales, Cannon postulates six categories as "the major areas where Lovecraft located his horrors": the past, the sea, below, beyond, dreamland, and decadence. This curiously unparallel schema does have the strength of showing that Lovecraft's fictional structures and concerns are fairly well established in the early tales; Cannon does not strongly press this categorisation as a structural paradigm upon the more mature tales, which (given their protean nature) is probably just as well. Rather, he examines each of the later works as an entity in its own right, with a chronological arrangement.

Ironically, after criticising the Burleson *Critical Study* (in the bibliography) for spending a lot of space on plot summary, Cannon in the Twayne volume finds it necessary to do exactly the same thing throughout. His discussions do provide, nonetheless, spots of fresh insight. It is interesting to see, for example, the Whateley family of "The Dunwich Horror" compared with, and said to be a sardonic picture of, Lovecraft's grandfather, mother, and himself (whether or not one subscribes to such biographical approaches). It is interesting to hear it said (with much reason) that Frank Elwood could and should have been the narrator of "The Dreams in the Witch House". It is interesting to see "The Music of Erich Zann" explored psychologically. It is interesting to see the notion developed, by way of "The Thing on the Doorstep" and other works, that in Lovecraft "the act of writing assumes heroic proportions, constituting the true road to immortality". Indeed, perhaps the strongest feature of this study is Cannon's knack for interweaving the texts, finding threads of commonality--as when the staring, bulging-eyed Robert Blake at the end of "The Haunter of the Dark" recalls the same imagery in "The Music of Erich Zann".

It is less easy, however, for me to react with enthusiasm to a description of "The Night Ocean" (to whatever extent Lovecraft may have revised it) as a "sluggish tale" full of "nebulous similes and metaphors"; or to the statement that "The Nameless City" produces "more smiles than shudders"; or to a dismissal of "The Terrible Old Man" as a "false start" expressive of the author's bigotry in the matter of the "charmed circle". Here Cannon follows de Camp in missing or ignoring the irony in the language, and in ascribing to the text--outmodedly, in terms of modern critical theory--the author's self-present and self-editorial speaking voice. (Far from being a "false start", "The Terrible Old Man" is a superbly interpretable story, as I have elsewhere shown.) This notion of authorial "presence" obtrudes on the discussion at other times as well, as when we are told (of Randolph Carter) that "In control of Carter's fate is not the grim, impersonal force of the universe . . . but the creative imagination of Lovecraft himself." As much as I like the sonorous ring of such phraseology, it is difficult to know what it could mean, in the context of current theories of language and textuality. Still, critical approaches can be expected to vary.

Following his discussion of the texts, Cannon provides a chapter on Lovecraft's critical reputation; as is frequently the case with the necessity of following the Procrustean contours of the Twayne format, this chapter is scandalously brief. But even aside from that, one must remark that the chapter is curiously reductive in its survey of the literature. It is strange to see, here, that in a coverage of recent Lovecraft criticism, Joshi's *Starmont Reader's Guide* and my own Greenwood Press *Critical Study* are not so much as mentioned. Reading this chapter, one may feel, on the other hand and to the same point, that while Barton St. Armand (via Silver Scarab Press and Dragon Press) has produced some notable contributions to the field, and has gone some distance toward placing Lovecraft in a wider academic context, at times Cannon's assessment of those contributions describes the states of progress in the field a bit one-sidedly. Cannon is right on the mark, anyway, in concluding that Lovecraft deserves, and will probably receive, a firmer place in "the literary consciousness of America".

Altogether, despite some rather pronounced reservations, I find Cannon's book reasonably ably executed, written in a lucid style, given to well-organised and productive use of its source materials and references, and critically evaluative of the fiction in a fairly balanced manner.

To paraphrase Willis Conover: a Twayne *Lovecraft* at last.

--Donald R. Burleson, Ph.D.

In recent years, research in the writings of H. P. Lovecraft has taken many interesting and exciting turns; many right here in the pages of *Lovecraft Studies*. Unknown sources for Lovecraft's stories have been revealed; fresh insights have been given to facets of Lovecraft's work that have too long been obscured by the oft-repeated formulaic nonsense originating from slavish adulation; and pieces in the puzzle that comprise Lovecraft and his work are continually being found and fixed in what we hope are their correct locations. Yet the most revelatory work continues to be published piecemeal in specialized little journals and amateur publications, not unlike those in which the *raison d'être* of our interest had his work published in the early part of this century.

Although the increasingly frequent appearances of book-length studies of Lovecraft are heartening, the larger arena for discussion afforded by books has been used fruitfully only rarely, as in the case of Maurice Lévy's *Lovecraft* (1972; translated into English 1988) and S. T. Joshi's *H. P. Lovecraft* (1982). Indeed, Fritz Leiber's monumental "Literary Copernicus" essay continues to speak volumes in its relatively few pages, remaining an achievement that has yet to be duplicated by authors of entire books on Lovecraft. This is not to say that Lovecraft is so shallow a subject that one cannot fill an entire book with worthwhile critical commentary. Far from it. There does indeed remain much to be written, especially in the area of critical analysis of what Lovecraft actually wrote, and it can safely be said that a number of scholars are continuing to develop and discuss valuable and insightful material that may one day see print in book form--material that examines the whole of Lovecraft's writing in the context of his life and times.

The new Lovecraft volume in Twayne's United States Authors Series is the latest addition to the slowly growing library of book-length studies of Lovecraft's work. It seems to me that since the mid-1970s at least three other writers were to undertake the book, so its long-awaited appearance is most gratifying. The book's publication in the late 1980s may be something of a godsend because it contains much valuable information that was simply unavailable a decade ago, and the additional time has given scholars an opportunity to reevaluate Lovecraft's work at greater distance and unencumbered by early errors.

The author clearly knows the canonical Lovecraft works, and also the latest research done in the field. His unswerving avoidance of the hoary old myths about Lovecraft is refreshing, for it shows that there is no longer a need to apologize for the early misleading if well-intended analysis of Lovecraft's work. Perhaps in another dozen years the infelicities of the earliest Lovecraft critics will be forgotten, or at least be a whimsical memory.

The book is an adequate introduction to Lovecraft's work. It takes a conservative approach in following a more or less chronological analysis of his work, but despite the chronological anchor it remains somewhat unfocused. Certainly all the major works are covered and the author groups the stories into convenient if arbitrary categories, but the book remains un-unified despite the ample resources Lovecraft provided for examining his work in a unified way. Who was Lovecraft? What did he write, and why did he write it? These questions remain, and surely should be addressed in a general survey of a writer's works such as this one. The whole of Lovecraft's writing shows a great unity and purpose that one could never find in any of the pulp writers of the 1930s, and yet the fact that Lovecraft infused himself thoroughly into his work, as any great author or artist does, seems to be glossed over.

Seasoned readers of *Lovecraft Studies* may find the book unsatisfying and perhaps superfluous. To be sure, it was not written for die-hard Lovecraftians, but to give a general overview of the work and life of an American author to undergraduate students. To someone who knows little or nothing about Lovecraft's stories, the book is a helpful distillation of information and most certainly will steer the interested reader to resources for pursuing greater personal exploration of the twentieth century's master of horror fiction. But the book seems "superfluous", as I suggested, because it says little that hasn't been said before, and sometimes restates information sprawlingly. The myriad quotations are a simple indication of that.

Previous works by S. T. Joshi and Donald R. Burleson have undertaken much the same task as the Twayne book with reasonable success. In the cramped quarters of Joshi's book (a scant 83 pages of which fewer than 60 contain narrative prose, the balance being indexes, notes, and such), one finds much that is not found elsewhere, arranged competently and compactly. Burleson's book is nearly three times larger than Joshi's and tends to cover the same ground; Burleson also takes the opportunity to give greater audience to theses that have appeared previously in articles in small publications. The insights there are farther apart, although we now find much space devoted to plot descriptions, perhaps a necessary evil in a book written for a general audience. However, there are ways to discuss an author's works for a general audience that do not entail describing or summarizing the plots. (One shudders to think what sort of studies of Lovecraft we would have if he had lived long enough or had sufficient inspiration to write fifty more stories than he did write.) In the bibliography, Cannon calls the summarizing of plots in Burleson's book a poor substitute for cogent analysis, but Cannon seems equally guilty of that practice in his own book. Perhaps a future book

will be able to tackle the question, What did Lovecraft write and what did he write about? in a way that does not involve ticking off the plots of every single story, but rather examines larger movements in themes, images, and so on.

We also find in the Twayne book a fear to paraphrase, to say in one's own words what another has said. The myriad page citations become burdensome after a while (with as many as eleven on a single page). Occasionally the juxtaposition of Lovecraft's words with Cannon's evokes unintended amusement ("Instead of going to be with a beautiful girl who turns to have been guillotined, however, he gets involved with 'an old German viol-player, a strange dumb man who signed his name Erich Zann'"), while the incessant use of quotation marks around such insignificant phrases as "the 'vine-crowned' youth Iranon, 'a singer of songs,' and 'not wholly sorry' and 'Edwin M. Lillibridge'" is maddening. Equally distracting is a tendency to name-drop. The allusions to Melville, Waugh, and others say far more about the extent of Cannon than they do about Lovecraft. Sometimes when nuggets of insight are offered, the true insight is withheld. For instance, when Cannon says that Lovecraft's famous statement about his Marblehead experience "should not be taken wholly at face value" and that "it indicates, as none of his direct comments on the matter do, why his marriage . . . was doomed", the reader, either neophyte or seasoned Lovecraftian, is left to wonder why that is the case. The final sentence of the book almost seems to negate the author's intent to show that Lovecraft is worth serious attention as a major writer, for when he says that Lovecraft "is well on his way toward *sleeping* [my italics], like one of his insidious horrors some might say, into the literary consciousness of America", he seems still to say that Lovecraft is not quite worth serious attention.

The Twayne United States Authors Series may not have been the place to undertake a full-length critical analysis of the work of H. P. Lovecraft, so we should judge it on what it has set out to do. As a general survey of Lovecraft's fiction, it pulls together the current state of Lovecraft research into a slim, readable volume. To the general reader, *H. P. Lovecraft* provides a worthwhile introduction to the writings of an author who defined the shape of horror fiction in the twentieth century in his own image. We can only wait patiently for a more ambitious analysis of Lovecraft's life and work.

--David E. Schultz

In appraising a biographical and critical study of someone who played as important a role in my life as H. P. Lovecraft, my first and immediate reaction is likely to be of a generalized nature. If it appears to be a volume so unfavorable that it bristles with self-important hostility, my natural impulse would be to close it with a snap. But Peter Cannon's study, while critical enough in certain chapters, isn't like that at all. I feel it to be a *totally honest* volume, with a complete absence of self-aggrandizing distortions. His general approach is scholarly, so that a well-rounded portrait of Lovecraft as an important literary figure is more central to him than any other factor. I am not in agreement with some of his judgments, but with perhaps a little more than three-quarters of them I can find nothing to quarrel, and he is very careful to include an abundance of varying views, so the reader is left in no doubt as to the extent of his scholarship. Despite his most severely implied disagreements with several of Lovecraft's points of view, his admiration for him as a writer of creative genius shines through.

A youthful friendship and nearly two decades of correspondence with Lovecraft--aside from the fact that we met and talked at length many times--have convinced me beyond dispute that the major themes of his fiction were the opposite of allegorical. The Eastern World--particularly China in dramatically stage presentations of human conflict--appears to have been able to make use of the allegorical without involving what we think of as the didactic. But that is not at all true of European literature in general--*Pilgrim's Progress* comes instantly to mind here--and I've never known anyone who hated and shunned the symbolically moralistic as did Lovecraft. His prime artistic concern was to create an *atmosphere of cosmic terror* through a genius-inspired kind of suggestiveness. More than any other single factor it sheds a most revealing light on the nature of Lovecraft's fiction. And fiction is just one of five or six other, almost as important aspects of his work as a whole that Peter Cannon has dwelt on with a trustworthy kind of well-roundedness that makes this so admirable a study.

--Frank Belknap Long

"In Defense of TUSAS 549"

In replying to the adverse criticisms of my weird study *H. P. Lovecraft*, I must begin by conceding its limitations--and its biases. My response falls into three parts: (1) comment on specific points, (2) discussion of larger matters of emphasis and attitude, and (3) some reflection on the theory and practice of literary criticism.

Like any work written with an awareness of its predecessors, mine cannot help answering those predecessors. Just as Sonia Davis's original unedited memoir takes issue with some of Paul Cook's rosier assessments of HPL's character, just as Frank Long's *Dreamer* corrects de Camp, so my book challenges some of the assumptions in the two major critical studies of comparable size and scope--S. T. Joshi's Starmont guide and Donald R. Burleson's Greenwood Press volume. In preparing the Twayne Lovecraft, I constantly consulted these two landmark studies, whose authors are universally acknowledged to stand in a class by themselves at the top of the field. If at times I beg to differ with their judgments, I do so respectfully.

Concerning my "curious silence on Lovecraft's marriage", I admit I'm guilty of the imitative fallacy--I'm as reticent on the matter as HPL himself. (I may too have been subconsciously emulating Nicholas Jenkins, narrator of Anthony Powell's Proustian *A Dance to the Music of Time*, who scarcely mentions his marriage in the course of some 3,000 pages.) Yet I have tried through remarks on the psychological and autobiographical aspects of the fiction to suggest why he fled from Sonia and from women in general. His waxing ecstatic over Marblehead while ignoring the emotional experience of his marriage amounts, I feel, to a kind of "curious incident of the dog in the night-time"--from which readers may draw their own conclusions. For the record, I believe that Lovecraft was not, as some would have it, a repressed sexual deviant but an extremely inhibited heterosexual.

Give the thematic/geographical organization of my discussions of the fiction, some stories do get oddly juxtaposed, including the two serials for *Home Brew*, "Herbert West--Reanimator" and "The Lurking Fear" (though I consider the latter on the whole no improvement over the former). Since generally there is no clear progression from one early story to the next, I don't think a strictly chronological approach to Lovecraft's apprenticeship period would be very enlightening. I do mention in passing that the composition of *Charles Dexter Ward* immediately followed that of the *Dream-Quest*, though since the New England vein was already approaching maturity by the time HPL abandoned dreamland, I didn't feel it necessary to elaborate on the transition as such from the one novel to the other.

As for the charge of excessive plot synopsis, I have faith that those less intimate with HPL's fiction than my detractors will be able to discriminate between what constitutes telling detail selected to support critical argument (and, yes, also to convey the gist of the plot) and what is merely padding. Of course, since my book concentrates on analyzing the tales individually, in contrast, say, to the thematic approach of Maurice Lévy's Wayne State Press study, I no doubt unduly neglect some larger concerns in my effort to cover all the fiction (with the exception of curiosities like "Old Bugs", "Sweet Ermmengarde", and *Ibid*).

I may be timid in asserting Lovecraft's importance, but I do not call him *merely* "one of America's greatest literary eccentrics". The sentence in question reads: "I hope this study will help persuade [skeptics] that Lovecraft is more than a mere horror writer, that at the very least he deserves recognition as one of America's greatest literary eccentrics." Such distortion seems to me "a little shabby". Cautious understatement, in my opinion, will serve the cause of promoting Lovecraft better than otherwise.

I have to admit I left myself vulnerable by praising "The Dunwich Horror" as popular entertainment. Perhaps instead I should have connected the story with Hawthorne's novel of illegitimacy and questionable paternity, *The Scarlet Letter*, which likewise opens after the passion has been spent. I may be stretching things a bit, but I can envision an entire paper devoted to the parallels between Lavinia and Hester, decadent Dunwich and Puritan Boston, Wizard Whateley and Chillingworth, even Yog-Sothoth and Dimmesdale.

As for my "somewhat grotesque comparison of 'Out of the Aeons' with Evelyn Waugh," I may have gotten the idea for this from Joshi's essay "M. R. James and the Limitations of the Ghost Story", which calls Jack Sullivan's comparisons of James with Yeats, Eliot, Pound, and Waugh in *Elegant Nightmares* "grotesquely inappropriate". Too, I was immersed at the time in Martin Stannard's biography of Waugh. In any case, I do link Lovecraft with a more appropriate British author, Rudyard Kipling, whose tale "At the End of the Passage" appears to have influenced "Out of the Aeons". As shameless as such name-dropping may be, I like to think it helps convince literate readers that Lovecraft is worthy of their attention.

I agree that Lovecraft's work has a "philosophical depth and richness entirely absent in that of Sherlock Holmes' creator", as the paragraph following the one in which I compare his appeal with that of Conan Doyle indicates. That Lovecraft can appeal to "juvenile" tastes as well as to more mature sensibilities does not diminish him.

In my conclusion I cite neither Joshi's Starmont guide nor Burleson's Greenwood Press volume, since in the context of discussing Lovecraft's reputation beyond the genre I cite only works published by university presses or mainstream houses. Such lack of mention is meant as no reflection on the value of those studies. If I single out Barton St. Armand among critics, I do so in part to make up for past neglect, especially at Burleson's hands. I'm pleased to see Burleson here acknowledge St. Armand's contributions to the field.

I almost didn't consult two minor critics, John Taylor Gatto and Darrell Schweitzer, the authors respectively of the Monarch Notes and the Borgo Press study, because of Joshi's blanket dismissal of them. When I finally did go back to their works, however, I discovered some of the observations at least worthy of a hearing (e.g., Gatto's erotic interpretation of "The Whisperer in Darkness" and Schweitzer's attack on *ATMOM*). I regret any oversights in attribution of credit, though since Joshi was one of the principle readers of the text in manuscript, he bears some responsibility for their slipping by.

As for my failing to note "the self-parodic humour" of "The Hound", I do in fact state that Lovecraft "flirts with parody", adding that he seems to have forgotten the spirit in which he wrote the tale when he condemned it as a "piece of junk" years later. I believe the tone of my discussion of "Herbert West--Reanimator" betrays a certain sensitivity to that tale's comic aspects.

In a similar vein, I would argue that the "unintended amusement" in the juxtaposition of some of my words and Lovecraft's is quite intended. I was trying to be funny (maybe unsuccessfully). If I seem to be making excuses in hindsight, be it noted that in the first paragraph of my preface I invoke those fellow Lovecraftians who season their obsession "with a healthy dose of humor". The tone of the "About the Author" also serves to warn that my approach is not entirely straight-faced. I can understand David Schultz's concern about demeaning one's subject by stooping to the low joke, as Mark Twain did in those painful last chapters of *Huck Finn*. By describing HPL in my closing sentence as "sleeping, like one of his insidious horrors some might say [not I necessarily], into the literary consciousness of America", I may be irreverent, but I don't think I undermine the essential seriousness of my study.

Yes, I do put myself in de Camp's camp by stressing the racism of "The Terrible Old Man", which I agree is more than simply a hostile snarl at aliens. It occurs to me now that I might very well have footnoted Burleson on its ambiguities. That Lovecraft may have been sending-up his own charmed New England circle as well, however, doesn't negate the story's fundamental xenophobia, especially in the light of his next tale, "The Street", which I doubt anyone could regard as anything but an attack on foreigners.

As for my low estimation of "The Night Ocean", I don't ignore the facts--I simply interpret them differently. Dirk Mosig's original claim that this tale by Robert Barlow was the capstone to Lovecraft's career should have been examined as skeptically as the theory that a second gunman fired from the grassy knoll. I regret that no one to date has bothered to print a rebuttal, which would have allowed me to relegate the matter to a footnote. A Lovecraft "revision" can run anywhere along a spectrum from a lightly edited to a ghostwritten effort. My contention, based on internal evidence consistent with the extant remarks in letters, is that he simply *edited* this tale--heavily perhaps--which is still far from writing it. When Lovecraft says he "ripped the text to pieces in spots", he takes about as much credit for Barlow's draft as I do for articles I copy edit for the MLA. By Joshi's standards, we would be obliged to treat many a tale published in *Twilight Zone* magazine as the work of T. E. D. Klein, but while such stories would tell us something about Klein's skill as a line editor, they would reveal little about the art of Klein's own fiction. To compare "The Night Ocean" with the Derleth "collaborations" may be invidious, yet Necronomicon Press continues to bill Lovecraft alone on the cover of its edition of a tale substantially Barlow's. [*This oversight has already been corrected in the most recent printing of the booklet (January 1989) where Barlow and Lovecraft are given equal billing--publisher.*] At least Derleth also put the name of the real author on the Arkham House editions of his pastiches.

To bolster my case for "Medusa's Coil", I wish now that I'd linked it specifically to William Faulkner's *Sanctuary*. While reading Stephen Oates's biography of Faulkner, I thought for a moment that this novel of sexual sensation might have actually influenced "Medusa's Coil", but, alas, it was published in 1931, the year after HPL wrote the story for Zealia Bishop.

Moving on to broader issues, I admit that I've given the earlier tales proportionately too much space and the later ones too little. Within the constraints of the Twayne format, I could have achieved a somewhat better balance by expanding later chapters. Yet an approach such as mine that traces Lovecraft's evolution as an artist requires that lesser works receive their due. For example, both "The Horror at Red Hook" and "He" merit attention for the insights they provide into Lovecraft's state of mind during his New York exile, even though they're undistinguished tales in themselves. As for the related charge of inadequate treatment of the later stories, I realized when I came to write about these complex works that there was no way I could do them full justice, which only a far longer study, limited to,

say, the cosmic tales from "The Call of Cthulhu" on, could begin to achieve. Expanded coverage would still have necessitated my being selective. I therefore chose to dwell on a few themes that I deemed important or hitherto overlooked.

I deliberately scanted Lovecraft's worldview and the mythology that embodies it (I mention the "Cthulhu Mythos" and cognates like the "Lovecraft Mythos" only once), in part because these have been covered in depth elsewhere. Beyond the basics of structure and technique, I focus on the psychological aspects of the fiction. I have no quarrel with Long's assertion that HPL's prime concern was to create an atmosphere of cosmic terror--this was, traditional critics might say, his "authorial intention"--but like most writers he revealed more about himself in his work than he knew. I state it nowhere explicitly (perhaps I should have in my preface), but my main purpose is to demonstrate Lovecraft's growth not just as an artist but as a person, to show how he moved from a narcissistic to a more humanistic view of life. The conflicts in the best of his stories might be said to arise from the unconscious struggle between his cosmic indifferentism and his more humane impulses.

The problem with such an analysis, of course, is that it doesn't prove Lovecraft's greatness. One might gain any number of insights into Robert E. Howard from his Conan stories or Edgar Rice Burroughs from his Tarzan books, but such wouldn't elevate these authors above the pulp level. (I suspect that a purely commercial writer like Robert Ludlum reveals virtually nothing about himself in his fiction.) Too, by stressing psychology I in effect associate myself with the school of Vincent Starrett and Winfield Townley Scott, who find Lovecraft an interesting personality, "his own most fantastic creation," but don't take a very "lofty" view of his work. If I seem more often a referee than an advocate, I nonetheless take comfort in imagining that, as Long points out, my admiration of Lovecraft "as a writer of creative genius shines through".

As an amateur scholar with only a superficial knowledge of critical theory, I have to say I prefer nontechnical criticism that is also a pleasure to read. The critics I most admire include that old-fashioned man of letters Edmund Wilson (despite his prejudices against Lovecraft and imaginative fiction in general). In my view, the best interpreters of literature are often the producers of it--novelists like George Orwell and Evelyn Waugh, to cite two British favorites of mine, or John Updike, who manages to write elegant essays and reviews that are as insightful as any of the more formal criticism coming out of America today. Many of the finest academic papers, I've noticed from perusing *PMLA*, continue to be written in ordinary English, however abstruse their arguments or difficult their meaning.

At the same time, I can understand why some scholars feel the need to communicate with one another in a highly technical language, as do doctors, engineers, and others whose professions require mathematical precision. Though I have but a dim grasp of deconstruction, I'm willing to grant the validity of this post-structuralist approach to literature. I'd even allow that Lovecraft is an especially suitable subject to deconstruct, given the place of "ultimate Chaos" in his fiction. But as with any critical method, abuses can occur. I have a strong suspicion that the jargon and word play of which deconstructionists are so enamored illuminate the text no better than do experiments in parapsychology advance science.

To paraphrase the great Northrop Frye, the fundamental critical act is the act of recognition, seeing what is there, as distinct from merely seeing a cold and unyielding surface, the polished Narcissus glass of one's own ego.

--Peter Cannon



**H. P. LOVECRAFT. *The Horror in the Museum and Other Revisions*. With texts edited by S. T. Joshi, and an introduction by August Derleth. Sauk City, WI: Arkham House Publishers, 1989, 450 pp. \$18.95 hc.**

**Reviewed by Robert M. Price.**

The publication of this fourth and final Arkham House volume of Lovecraft's fiction is a cause for rejoicing. Of course the entire project was much-needed: the restoration of Lovecraft's texts as he wrote them, scraped clean of bungling editorial intrusion and of typographical corrosion. On that score, the present volume was the most needed of the four since its corruption was by far the greatest. Indeed, the 1970 edition might well have been called *The Horror in the Dust Jacket*. Who, for instance, can forget the jolting experience of first encountering one character's warning cry of "The Old Bones!" according to the old edition? Apparently the proofreader's sanity had been blasted as well as the character's! This edition also restores the considerable wordage excised from both "The Mound" and "Medusa's Coil" by August Derleth for their original *Weird Tales* appearances. Editor S. T. Joshi's customary preface on textual questions is helpful in its pointing out of many such instances of ruination and restoration.

In his preface Joshi briefly addresses the question of the extent of HPL's revisory labors in some of the tales, explaining the collection's division on this basis into the categories "Primary Revisions" and "Secondary Revisions." I would take issue at one single point; I believe a letter from Clark Ashton Smith as well as analysis of the text itself indicates that Lovecraft wrote only several opening and closing paragraphs of "The Crawling Chaos" (see my "New Clues to Lovecraft's Role in 'Out of the Aeons' and 'The Crawling Chaos'" in *Crypt of Cthulhu* #17).

Not only have the stories been somewhat reshuffled from the 1970 edition, as with the three preceding volumes in this series, but no less than five new tales appear! Many Lovecraftians have known for some years of Lovecraft's revisory role in "The Night Ocean" (with Robert Barlow), "The Trap" (with Henry Whitehead), "Ashes" (with C. M. Eddy), "The Tree on the Hill" and "The Disinternment" (both with Duane Rimel), but for many the stories themselves remained elusive. All are included here. In fact, because of this inclusion of "new" Lovecraftian fiction, I would venture to say that the textually corrected *The Horror in the Museum* is the most important of the four volumes. We may hope that this fresh appearance of the newly enlarged canon of Lovecraft's revisions will both introduce a new generation of readers to these marvelous tales and incite a new phase of critical study of the stories.

In recent years many have bemoaned the apparent commercialization of Arkham House, especially its turn toward mainstream horror, fantasy, and science fiction. We recall the original orientation of Arkham House as a specialty press, a small press created by fans (Derleth and Wandrei) for fans of Lovecraft and the *Weird Tales* tradition. James Turner's willingness to take on this series of textually purified new editions shows the old sentiments did not die with Derleth, not completely. Yet would that Arkham House might see its way to further special interest projects such as collections of the tales of Duane Rimel, C. M. Eddy, and Robert Barlow, who wrote many other stories besides those improved by Lovecraft and contained in this volume. That is, admittedly, quite a lot to ask, and we will probably have to be satisfied for a long time with editions from the fan presses.

Two final notes: "Four O'clock," which appeared in the 1970 edition, is gone. It turned out, as Joshi explains, not to have been Lovecraft's at all. Also, readers curious as to which tale the cover illustrates will be left guessing. James Turner admits it is Lovecraftian only in general tenor. Some may feel it more reflective of E. C. Comics. Though artist Raymond Bayless does beautiful work, one might have wished for a new cover by Gahan Wilson whose dust jacket graced (or grossed) the 1970 edition.

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**DUANE W. RIMEL.** *The Forbidden Room*. Evanston, IL: Moshassuck Press, 1988. 19pp. \$3.00 pb.  
**JOSEPHINE RICHARDSON et al.** *Within the Circle: In Memoriam: Franklin Lee Baldwin 1913-1987*. Evanston, IL: Moshassuck Press, 1988. 100 pp. \$12.00 pb. (Available from Kenneth W. Faig, Jr., 1111 Church Street, Apt. 705, Evanston, IL 60201.)  
 Reviewed by Steven J. Maricanda.

Kenneth W. Faig, Lovecraft's leading biographer, has recently issued the third and fourth publications in his Moshassuck Monograph Series. Both *The Forbidden Room* and *Within the Circle* are limited to 75 copies, and both are photocopied from typewritten text. The small print run is fitting in the sense that both these books will be of more limited interest than the earlier publications in the series, all of which dealt with Lovecraft and his family. There is, though, much of interest to be found in both these books regarding the "fan" movement of the 1930s and 1940s.

*The Forbidden Room* features the brief story of the same name written by Duane Rimel in 1934 for Donald Wollheim's *Fanciful Tales*. Rimel, along with F. Lee Baldwin (another Pacific Northwest fan, and the subject of *Within the Circle*), Robert Bloch, and others was one of the many young fantasy enthusiasts that Lovecraft both encouraged and influenced. The story itself, reminiscent of Lovecraft's "The Picture in the House", is somewhat synoptic and predictable, but is yet a respectable effort for a nineteen-year-old beginner. The text reprints both the *Fanciful Tales* text and another unsourced "amateur press association appearance in reset type". Also included is a reproduction of the linoleum cut the author did to accompany his tale.

Of more interest, perhaps, than the story itself are the "Publisher's Preface" by Faig and "How 'The Forbidden Room' Happened", written for this edition by Rimel. The latter recounts how the story was created, and contains an inadvertently humorous reference to the "Johnny-come-lately 'researchers'" who the author fears will ascribe whatever small merit "The Forbidden Room" might have to Lovecraft's revisionary pen. Though this fear is perhaps not unfounded--S. T. Joshi and others have already drafted Rimel's "The Tree on the Hill" and "The Disinternment" into the canon--"The Forbidden Room" unfortunately reflects none of the Lovecraft magic.

*Within the Circle*, subtitled *In Memoriam: Franklin Lee Baldwin 1913-1987*, contains one pseudonymous item of fiction by its subject but concentrates on reprinting his nonfiction from magazines like *The*

*Fantasy Fan and The Acolyte*. This book is about five times the twenty pages that make up the Rimel book. Faig has gathered an impressive amount and variety of material for such a relatively obscure subject. As well as a large amount of work by Baldwin, the editor has collected related material by Rimel, Francis T. Laney, August Derleth, and Josephine Richardson, who was Baldwin's companion at the end of his life. The latter's memoir, which concentrates on Baldwin's personality and musical ability, is touching in its simplicity. There is a generous selection of Baldwin's letters to editors and fans spanning a period of nearly fifty years, and many columns that appeared in fan magazines.

The tidbits of information contained in the latter are largely derived from what must have been a voluminous correspondence with authors and other fans. Some Lovecraft-related items, indeed, seem to have been lifted directly from his letters to his young correspondent. One amusingly blatant instance of this: Baldwin's discussion of Ambrose Bierce, Adolphe de Castro, and *The Monk and the Hangman's Daughter* (*The Fantasy Fan*, February 1935) parrots Lovecraft's letter to Baldwin of November 2, 1934, right down to the concluding pronouncement that "it is not a weird tale".

Faig's unselfish motivation--encouragement, perhaps, for the still-living Rimel and encomium for the late Baldwin--for publishing these items deserves praise. "I hope this volume will reach a few of the old fans who will remember F. Lee Baldwin", he says in his introduction to *Within the Circle*. Interested readers of this generation, too, can get a good feel for the fan environment of half a century ago. Despite all this, one cannot help but wish--selfishly, it is true--that Faig's time could be spent writing the full-length biography of Lovecraft that we have yet to see from his most-qualified pen.

*Continued from page 13*

"As regards the hellish Black Book, if I can find some well-educated maniac, who hasn't been crammed with conventional occult hokus-pokus, I may have him write it for publication. If not, I may shoot myself full of dope sometime, and write it myself" (Howard to Lovecraft, May 24, 1932). Howard never did either. But he did tell us a surprising amount of important information as contained in *Nameless Cults*. In fact, the volume serves to connect several major areas of Howard's fiction. Of course Von Junzt mentions the Monolith of Stregoiacavar in "The Black Stone" as well as the Temple of the Toad in "The Thing on the Roof", but in "The Children of the Night" we find two tossed-off references not followed up in that story but central to two others. First is the god Gol-goroth who appears in one of the Turlough O'Brian adventures, "The Gods of Bal-Sagoth"; second is the cult of Bran which worships the stone image of Bran Mak Morn, an artifact that forms the basis for another Turlough tale, "The Dark Man", as well as providing a solid link to the Bran Mak Morn stories themselves (connected, in turn, to the King Kull series in "Kings of the Night").

Perhaps most startling of all is that in the Howard portion of "Black Eons", the character Allison tells his companion Brill about *Nameless Cults* and discloses that Von Junzt is the source of all our "information" about the Hyborian Age! Allison basically provides a kind of thumbnail sketch of the history outlined in Howard's mock essay "The Hyborian Age", which one must therefore suspect of being a verbatim extract from *Nameless Cults* (though of course we have no direct evidence that Howard so intended this). It is no less tempting to wonder if Kirowan got his information about the ring of Thoth-Ammon (in "The Haunter of the Ring") from Von Junzt's Hyborian section, since we first see the ring in the Conan tale "The Phoenix on the Sword".

Did Lovecraft mind the blatant imitation of his *Necronomicon* by Howard's *Nameless Cults*? Not at all! In fact he enthusiastically welcomed the volume into the growing phantom library of Mythos lore. Lovecraft often referred to the book in his own stories, mentioning it in the same breath with its older cousin the *Necronomicon*, as in "The Haunter of the Dark", when snooping Robert Blake stumbles upon a shelf of crumbling tomes in the Starry Wisdom Church: "He had himself read many of them--a Latin version of the abhorred *Necronomicon*, the sinister *Liber Ivonis*, the famous *Cultes des Goules* of Comte d'Erllette, the *Unaussprechlichen Kulten* of von Junzt, and old Ludvig Prinn's hellish *De Vermis Mysteriis*." (By the way, the second title is Clark Ashton Smith's creation, while the third and fifth are Robert Bloch's--by now everybody was playing the game!) So highly did Lovecraft esteem Howard's creation that he used it as the basis of one of his revision tales, "Out of the Eons", ghost-written for Hazel Heald. Much of the story is a flashback to ancient Mu, and the whole sub-narrative is presented as a summary from Von Junzt.

So we have come full circle. Robert E. Howard both borrowed from the Mythos of H. P. Lovecraft and contributed to it one of its most intriguing bits of lore. Howard's Mythos fiction echoes Lovecraft's own with remarkable authenticity, a fact that may surprise us since most of Howard's fiction, being of the action-adventure type, is so different from Lovecraft's Gothic horror.

## *Correspondence*

Darrell Schweitzer:

#17 is an admirable issue, containing what I've come to expect from *Lovecraft Studies*, a mixture of lucid, informative articles from the frontier of Lovecraftian research, and various curiosities.

The publisher's editorial reminds me of some of the letters Owlswick Press has received relating to our edition of *Al Azif*, the alleged facsimile-manuscripts of the *Necronomicon*. Never mind that this actually consists of three pages of pseudo-Arabic calligraphy by Robert Dills, which was then spliced up to make sixteen pages. Then the signatures repeat. The only other text is the de Camp introduction.

Despite this there seem to be a lot of people out there who are convinced--or are determined to convince themselves--that the book is "real". I've heard stories of people showing it to Middle Eastern diplomats who can "almost make it out". Allegedly there is even a "translation" available in occult bookstores. My favorite was the professor who had been completely bamboozled by his graduate student into trying to get a government grant to study the *Necronomicon* and prove the existence of the various Mythos entities. The usual approach these people take is to first ask for a copy of the (unavailable) book. Some then apply for permission to xerox it in the British Museum or some such place. When told of the hoaxical nature of the project, they return with something like, "Come on, now. Man to man, you can tell me the truth."

I suppose the only recourse any of us have is to explain that no, we cannot tell the truth, because we are in fact members of a vast conspiracy to keep this sort of thing hushed up for exclusive CIA use. We are also the people who cover up UFO reports and were chasing L. Ron Hubbard and Richard Shaver all those years.

We cannot be responsible for the activities of morons. Were modern "occultists" better educated, they might be trying to reconstruct the witches' brew from *Macbeth*. Should we then ban Shakespeare?

Fortunately such people are frequently so poorly educated and frequently deranged that they will never have much credibility. (If anything is a common denominator among Satanists and self-proclaimed black magicians, it is probably the inability to . . . er . . . spell. Not to mention punctuate.) I suppose the only responsible thing we can do is stop perpetrating hoaxes which, while they might be amusing to us, are fodder for the feeble-minded. Remember: you can't fool all the people all the time, but any charlatan worth his collection basket knows you can fool enough of the people enough of the time.

Norman Gayford's piece is easily the best in the issue. This is what I like to see in such an article: genuine information, which helps the reader understand the work better.

The Eduardo Haro Ibars article, though, is a mere curiosity, a sample of what Spanish critics are saying about the Old Gent. But beyond that, it's full of disappointing misconceptions, as if Ibars were trying to create an image of HPL in his mind, and rejecting or twisting any facts that don't fit . . . as indeed most of them don't. I don't think the Lovecraft revealed to us from his letters or from the memoirs written about him was all the time obsessed with hatred. That isn't the prevailing emotion.

Will Murray's article is, again, informative. Possibly you can include an appendix to the revised *Horror in the Museum*, including "The Disinterment" along with Bloch's "Satan's Servants" under "stories touched up by

Lovecraft".<sup>1</sup> There is a clear, quantitative difference between these and, say, "The Mound", namely that they had authors other than Lovecraft.

Don Burleson's piece on "The Bells" is, I am afraid, more Structuralist gibberish. Gore Vidal was right to call Structuralism "the French disease" . . . the symptoms are indeed fatal to a critic's career. As far as I am concerned, Burleson, like Samuel Delany, has retreated behind a haze of jargon and unproven assumptions and effectively stopped writing. His former work was often quite valuable, so the loss is a great shame.

This particular outbreak of the epidemic is almost stream-of-consciousness criticism. These various puns and word-associations may be (to some) clever, but I don't see what this has to do with the alleged subject of the article. One could in fact "deconstruct" the author's byline: "Don" suggests an academic *don*, a professor, with implications of stuffiness. "Ald" is possibly a dialectical variant of "old". So, the "old don" *R.*--that is "are". It should be *is*, but perhaps this is a deliberately ungrammatical joke, like the old mathematical one: "Pi R squared? No! Pie are round!" Then "Burleson" clearly suggests "burlesque," and "Ph.D." also has a common joking meaning: *Piled High and Deep*.

So the hidden meaning of the byline is "The old dons (i.e. academics) are burlesqued, Piled High and Deep." In other words, a parody of academic criticism. That the author's name meant something else when given to him by his parents is irrelevant. They are, after all, only the *authors*.

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#### Patrick Miller:

For thematic evidence that HPL's finest story, "The Colour out of Space", belongs to the Cthulhu Mythos, one need look no further than that inarguably Mythos story *At the Mountains of Madness*.

On page 99 of the early Arkham House editions of *At the Mountains of Madness and Other Novels*, third paragraph, we read about what the pilot Danforth saw, or thought he saw, beyond the mountains of madness:

He has on rare occasions whispered disjointed and irresponsible things about "The black pit," "the carven rim," "the proto-Shoggoths," "the windowless solids with five dimensions," "the nameless cylinder," "the elder Pharos," "Yog-Sothoth," "the primal white jelly," "*the color out of space*," "the wings," "the eyes in darkness," "the moon ladder," "the original, the eternal, the undying," and other bizarre conceptions. . . .

It's there in black and white--albeit with HPL's Old English spelling of "colour" changed to the Yankee "color", but it's there all the same. Perhaps the change in spelling is what has caused scholars from Lin Carter to Will Murray to overlook the inclusion of "Colour" among such Mythos entities as Yog-Sothoth, the proto-Shoggoths, et al; I don't know. But I do know this, HPL's inclusion of it among these entities and denizens meant he designated his "The Colour out of Space" as a Cthulhu Mythos story and that's good enough for me.

P.S. My italics on "the color out of space" in the Lovecraft quote.

*Will Murray responds:* While it's true that Lin Carter--and most other Lovecraft scholars for that matter--do not consider "The Colour out of Space" part of the mythos, I would like to direct Mr. Miller's attention to my article, "An Uncompromising Look at the Cthulhu Mythos" (*Lovecraft Studies #12 [Spring 1986]*) wherein I put forth the radical statement:

*In the interest of moving toward a more coherent, rational view of the Cthulhu Mythos, I propose that a list of H. P. Lovecraft stories which fit firmly and unqualifiedly into the Mythos read as follows:*

*"The Call of Cthulhu",  
"The Colour out of Space",  
"The Dunwich Horror",  
Period.*

1. ["The Disinterment" is in fact included in the revised *Horror in the Museum and Other Revisions*.--Ed.]

While it's true that I didn't cite the specific reference for *At the Mountains of Madness* (others have raised this issue and subsequently dismissed it--wrongly, I suppose--as inconclusive), I cited other, more compelling evidence and arguments.

As Mr. Miller says, "it's there in black and white".

S. T. Joshi responds: In the first place, Lovecraft wrote "colour out of space" in the passage cited from *At the Mountains of Madness*, as Mr. Miller could have seen if he had consulted my new Arkham edition. In the second place, a mere mention of this sort does not necessarily have any particular significance. Long before Will Murray's article I (in my Reader's Guide to H. P. Lovecraft) regarded "The Colour out of Space" as a mythos story, not on any random mentions in other stories, but because of the cosmic scope of the story and its incorporation of the imaginary New England setting (Arkham, Innsmouth, etc.). But of course such things apply to the majority of Lovecraft's tales, making the whole rubric of "Cthulhu Mythos" stories meaningless and cumbersome. I do not see that one accomplishes anything in bracketing some stories as "belonging" to the mythos and others as not; this hinders the understanding of Lovecraft because it obscures the thematic and philosophical unity that Lovecraft always maintained for the entirety of his work.

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**Steve Behrends, Ph.D.:**

I'd like to express my appreciation for the cover to *Lovecraft Studies* #17. Jason's illustration is one of his most atmospheric--which is saying a great deal--and your choice of pumpkin-orange paper complements the Halloween season perfectly.

Joshi's article on Lovecraft's manuscripts was fascinating and informative. I encourage your use of such factual and substantive articles (besides Joshi's work, I would say that David Schultz and Steven Mariconda both maintain a similar high standard in their essays). On the other hand, the vacuous and self-indulgent articles of Donald R. Burleson, Ph.D., should be relegated to chapters in some obscure doctoral thesis (perhaps a second one for Dr. Burleson?), where presumably they will never be read. But perhaps we should not be harsh with Dr. Burleson, for he is only one of many who have jumped aboard the bandwagon of an absurd school of literary criticism. Trendiness is not a crime. Burleson is presumably the product of his tutors, whose own words we surely hear in the silly belief that, since "modern criticism fortunately, is mostly free of the 'fallacy of primary teleology', i.e. the fallacy that we must look only for those qualities in a work that the author was conscious of supplying", there is some inherent validity in linking "The Bells" to "years" to the latin 'annulus' to Virginia Woolf. But why would Dr. Burleson believe that anyone could be interested in such specious, self-involved linguistic masturbation? But again, perhaps I'm too harsh: certainly his recent critical interpretations of Lovecraft make no less sense than the notion of reading the future from a pig's entrails (a practice highly regarded in certain select circles).

### *Lists and Notes by H. P. Lovecraft*

#### [NOTES ON CLOTHING STORES]

[Franklin Clothes, Brooklyn, N.Y.:]

Horrible stuff at this place--it must be an headquarters of prize-fight hangers-on and race track touts. All suits \$20.00--but I'd rather wear poor Leeds' 5-buck phenomenon than be seen in publick with this sort of Byzantine refuse!

[Howards Men's and Young Mens (sic) Clothes, Brooklyn, N.Y.:]

Really god stuff here--everything \$22.50. If I'd been able to spend that much, I'd have gotten a plain blue serge which the courteous salesman shew'd me. And if I'd struck it last week I might not have gone farther--thereby missing my bargain of bargains--which this salesman took to be a choice product of the custom tailor!

[Note of back of card for John's Spaghetti House, Brooklyn, N.Y.:]  
my favourite restaurant



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